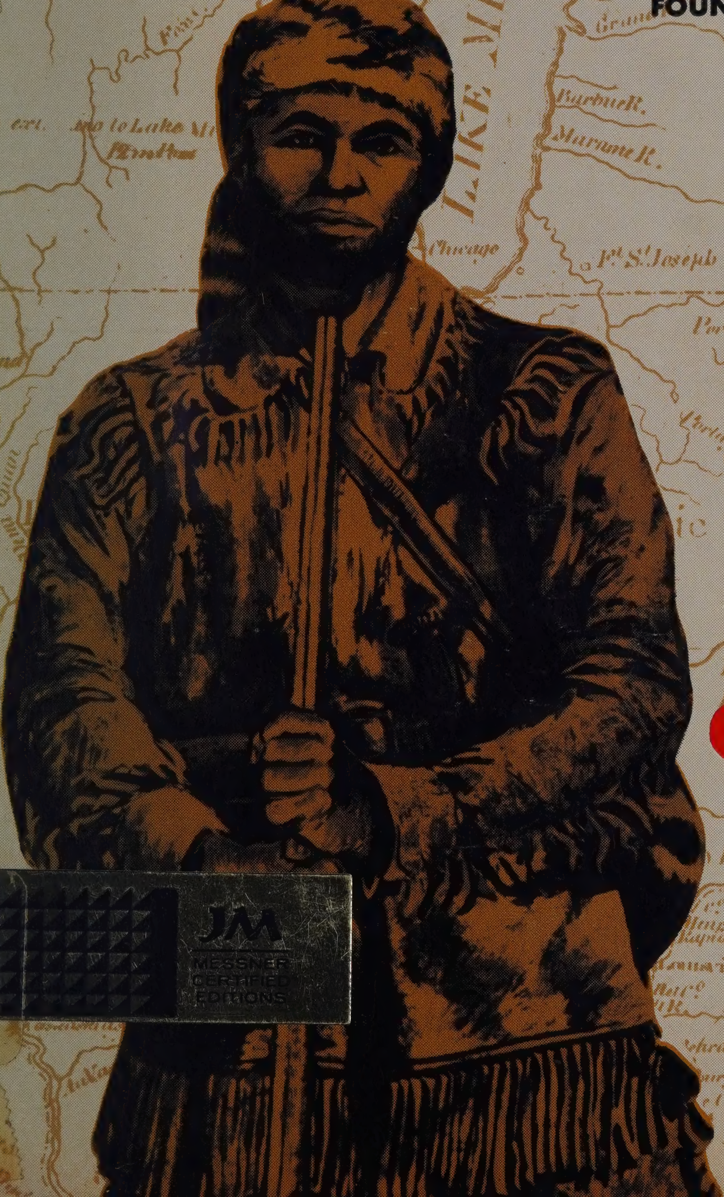
JEAN BAPTISTE POINTE DESABLE

FOUNDER of CHICAGO



by

SHIRLEY GRAHAM

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JEAN BAPTISTE POINTE DESABLE

Founder of Chicago

By SHIRLEY GRAHAM

Author of YOUR MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,
THERE WAS ONCE A SLAVE, *etc.*

In the eighteenth century the greedy kings of Europe were using America as a chessboard in the game of power. Only the bravest settlers dared oppose them, and Jean Baptiste was one of these. On the disputed wilderness he built a trading post and founded the city of Chicago.

The wilderness was violent, but Jean Baptiste had known violence from his earliest years in the West Indies. His father was a pirate, mate of *The Black Sea Gull* which plundered Caribbean ports and harried Spanish galleons. When Jean was eleven the Spaniards raided Saint Domingue, murdered his mother and destroyed his home. He wanted to go to sea but his father sent him to France to study—brief years of peace before Jean plunged into the great adventure of the New World.

It was a world of riches, furs and wood for the taking, so Jean decided to become a trader. Proudly he set sail in his own ship. But the vessel split in a hurricane off the Louisiana coast, and when Jean finally reached New Orleans he was penniless, without friends or credentials. He feared that at any moment he might be sold into slavery, for he had no way of proving that he was a free Negro. And what chance had a black man if the arrogant Spanish won New Orleans from the French?

Dreaming of freedom to trade, Jean Baptiste turned to the prairies that "stretched like a buffalo hide." Someday, somewhere, he would find his own land and carve his own niche in America. Meanwhile he traded furs along the Mississippi Valley. But hostile Indians captured him and brought him before the great Chief Pontiac on suspicion of espionage for the British.

(*continued on back flap*)

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Earl Ford McNaughton

Jean Baptiste Pointe De Sable

Nothing has ever been written about this man who was the founder of present-day Chicago. According to records this Negro from Santo Domingo came to North America around 1764 and established fur trading connections along the Mississippi and throughout the Lake region. He was an educated man, spoke many languages and became the friend of the Potawatomi Indians who made him a member of their tribe. Against the exciting background of the conflicts among the French, Spanish, English and Indians for the commerce of the Mississippi, the author has written a fascinating story about a man whose place in history deserves wider recognition.

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Jean Baptiste Pointe De Sable

FOUNDER OF CHICAGO

by Shirley Graham

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To My Mother

Whose happy childhood was spent
on the shores of Lake Michigan

Introduction

Chicago, fabulous city! Never in the history of man has any metropolis equaled it: neither Thebes nor Babylon, Athens nor Rome, Paris nor New York combine that size and strength, energy and youth, accomplishment and power which spells this leviathan. Its six million citizens and servitors sprawl over more than two hundred square miles along Lake Michigan, spill over into Wisconsin, out over the plains of Illinois and across northern Indiana. Here centers an empire fed by forty railroads and sixteen air lines. Here the cattle on a thousand hills—six million head—with hogs and sheep are killed and packed and shipped out to the world. Here are made the plows which turn the soil, the harvesters which gather grain that most men eat, the shoes in which men walk. This inland city is an ocean port whose harbors welcome the commerce of the earth. And here housed in stone welded together by steel, live all the races of mankind, cheek by jowl, toiling and digging, forging, spinning, molding, singing and cursing: white, black, yellow and brown; English, French, Germans, Scandinavians, Italians, Irish, Jews, Poles, Czechs, Lithuanians, Croats, Greeks, Negroes, Japanese and Chinese. Its shining temples rise a thousand feet in the air; its palaces and slums are wonders to behold. Dirt and gold line the streets and ever-widening boulevards sweep in ever-widening circles of a glittering night. Men of vision and relentless will lived here—Cyrus McCormick, maker of harvesters; Jane Addams, social engineer; Theodore Dreiser, prophet; Carl Sandburg, poet; Eugene Debs, seer; Al Capone, racketeer; and Joe Louis.

This is the story of that city and of Jean Baptiste Pointe de Sable, first man to say, "This is the place I choose. Here I will build my house. For me, this is the best place."

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PART ONE - PIRATE

"*Captain* Long John Silver, sir! Honors goes to them that plans."

1

The "Black Sea Gull"

It was a sail! The boy who had been watching from the cliff all night leaped to his feet. Way off where gray sky touched dark, heaving waters, a bit of whiteness showed for a moment and then disappeared. The boy stood on the edge of the rock peering across the water. There it was again! The bobbing speck gradually took shape as a ship climbed slowly over the rim of the sea moving eastward toward La Tortuga. The boy clenched his teeth with anxiety. Surely this was his father's ship. Would they drop anchor first at La Tortuga? That rocky mass far out from land seemed to float in shadowy mist. Stopping there would mean hours—maybe days—of delay. A cry of joy was choked back just in time as the ship appeared to alter its course and head into Port de Paix. He must be very still. For now there were other anxieties. First, he must be sure it was the *Black Sea Gull.*

Nothing stirred in the harbor below except smoke moving lazily over the waterfront and above heaps of what had been buildings. Not a dog barked—not a cock crowed to greet the approaching day—no sound rumbled up from the streets. On this August dawn of 1755 the town of Port de Paix crouched along the shore, sinking into shadows, shrinking away from the alien ships in its waters. Those ships had brought the "Spanish devils" to Haiti.

Every child had heard of them. French planters often talked of how the conquistadors slaughtered island natives, how they tore up the good black earth looking for gold, then sailed away to Mexico and Peru. Old, mutilated Indians bore mute testimony to their having been there, while many blacks had known Spanish slavery. But all that was in the past. For years now Haiti was the most prosperous of good King Louis's New World colonies. Port de Paix flourished as a French port and St. Marc was surely the prettiest place in the world where a little boy could be born. But now there were the Spanish galleons.

The boy looked once more toward the sea. The ship was still too far away to recognize. He had always been the first to see it when it sailed into the Bay of St. Marc.

"Ma-ma! Ma-ma! The ship! He comes!" he'd shout running into the house.

They would stand together in the garden watching and waiting. A great lump rose in his throat. Again he saw the flames leaping through green foliage, their house burning like a torch—his mother lying on the ground, red blood spreading all over her dress! He seemed to hear shots and screams—saw people running—climbing up the steep slope. The boy dug his fists into his eyes. He must watch! *Gentle Jesus, make this my father's ship!*

He had never been permitted to board the *Black Sea Gull,* though he had asked many times. Most recently he had pressed his plea, pointing out that a male approaching his twelfth *jour de fête* was too advanced in years to continue woman's work—piddling about a garden, tending chickens. It was high time he went to sea! Why could he not . . . ? His father's hair had bristled like a golden mane as he cut him off. The sound of his voice had been frightening. Once more the boy fought back his tears. High waves were tossing the ship about. Suddenly he could distinguish masts and rigging. It was the *Black Sea Gull!*

No lights yet flashed in the harbor. Evidently no one down there had sighted it. Just then an orange-purple finger shot across the gray sky and the rugged crags of St. Nicholas were touched with light. Day was breaking. Soon the port would be a sparkling lake of green and turquoise under deep blue skies. The Spaniards with their big guns could easily capture an unsuspecting vessel. They would hang all on board and seize the booty. That is unless he, Jean Baptiste, swam out there and gave the alarm. Somewhere behind him a cock crowed.

The boy threw off his one loose garment. As he stood on the edge of the cliff, white spray from waves dashing on the rocks below clung to his thick, bushy hair and glistened on bare back and spindly legs. He stood a moment measuring the distance. It would be a long swim against an incoming tide. But a large part of his eleven years had been spent in the water. His only concern now was that time was running out. He must hurry! When he raised his arms the small dark body hung like an arrow against the sky. Then it lifted and curved into an expert dive which carried the boy well over slippery rocks and into the swelling gray sea.

The *Black Sea Gull* floated in a wide arc, her sails hanging limp. Morning breezes tugged in vain at the slack canvas. El Negre never took his ship into any harbor while coves and inlets of the surrounding land were hidden. The captain was known by no other name than the sobriquet "El Negre," but he was famous as much for cautious strategy as for his skill in navigation and the lightning certainty of his sword. The crew knew they would not enter port until full daylight. The trip had been good and now they dared squat about the deck in lazy content. Even the chief mate stood idle near the rail, looking off toward land.

He did not mingle with the crew and few had ever heard his name. The combination of fiery beard, skin of weather-blackened bronze and piercing gray eyes under thick tawny brows obscured racial origin. These things had no importance. When "tha mate" bellowed an order everything within the sound of his voice jumped!

It was at times like this, in a clean, quiet dawn, that the mate remembered places and sights far removed from tar and brine. He had come aboard this ship at Marseille.

"Je suis Pointe Dessaible." He announced himself thus. El Negre liked his looks. And that was all. Since that day Pointe Dessaible never again set his foot on France. From time to time he'd say to himself, "Next year I'm going back." But always it was "next year."

For three months now they had been cruising in waters off the coast of Hispaniola. The take was profitable. That last Dutch vessel had been particularly well stocked. They lost only one man during the trip. He fell overboard. Had they not at the moment been engaged in battle, Luigi would have been saved. Clumsy clout!

The holds below were filled to the hatches—and the mate's share would be large. He slipped his hand into the folds of the sash encircling his waist and drew out a bauble he was taking ashore with him. The delicately wrought gold bracelet seemed out of place in the rough, scarred hand. Yet as he turned the circlet about, his thick fingers handled it gently. Suzanne would like this. She would laugh, showing all her small white teeth. She would have no idea it was worth a king's ransom but would slip it on her soft, rounded arm where the stones would gleam against her black skin like heavy drops of blood. The big man shook himself impatiently. He returned the bracelet to the pouch in his sash and gripped the rail as if it were an adversary's throat. Sacred cow! How much longer must they drift around in the open sea? A faint glow touched the sky behind distant hills. A deep sigh welled up and the mate spat into the water. It was no longer unpenetrable but was faintly diffused with light. He seemed to have disturbed some large dark body down there. As he stared he caught the flash of what looked like a fin. Probably a shark, he thought idly. Then the cool morning wind blowing on his face sent his thoughts speeding across the water and into the day that soon would be.

This was the era when piracy was international. Every European power sought a foothold in the New World. While England, France and Spain were well entrenched on the continent, it was still open season for the fertile, palm-fringed islands in the Caribbean Sea. Kings and princes quarreled over them, drew up maps and divided them among themselves. They sent out ships to prey upon, loot and seize them from each other with no consideration for the people who lived on them. But their ships were in turn seized and plundered by bold adventurers who flew no standard save their own—who lived and died outside the law of kings and princes. They fortified Tortuga and it was their descendants who first settled Haiti. Sooner or later there was always the plank, the fatal sweep of sword or, God forbid, the hangman's noose. The man standing at the rail struck his clenched fist hard against the wood. No! This was no life for the boy! Better things were in store for him. Pointe Dessaible frowned. How old was he? "Almost twelve," was what he had said. Young jackanapes!

Twelve years! The *Black Sea Gull* had been buffeted and beaten all the way across the perilous Atlantic. There was nothing but darkness, heavy winds and angry waves until the happy day they were driven into the placid blue waters of the Caribbean and for the first time felt the warmth of the sun. Here on St. Croix, Pointe Dessaible found Suzanne. He came upon her bathing in a clear pool—a lovely, ebony figurine fused with life! With scarcely a moment's hesitation he seized and carried off this treasure. Later he discovered that he had stolen a valuable slave from one of the large Danish plantations. The girl was only too happy to have escaped from the sugar cane plantation. But Dessaible, however, did not want to run the risk of having her taken from him. And so the next time the ship stopped at St. Croix he hunted up the blond master and paid him a good price. Thus the bright-colored cottage overlooking the Bay of St. Marc was made secure. At Dessaible's request the priest drew up free papers for the woman who had been a slave. When her son was born free her joy was complete. And the priest baptized him Jean Baptiste.

The ship's bell sounded an end to daydreaming. Shadows were gone. The pale blue of sky came down to green waters while purple mountains piled up behind distant shores. Looking up, Dessaible saw the captain climbing to the lookout. He was stripped to the waist though he wore a turban of heavy cloth on his head. El Negre moved with surprising nimbleness for so large a man. Mighty muscles rippled beneath glistening skin. El Negre was from the Barbary coast of West Africa. In that crew of Greeks, Italians, Senegalese, Portuguese, Frenchmen and Danes no man questioned the authority of the black captain. The mate hurried to his place while the captain, high in the lookout, turned his glass about, carefully scrutinizing the entry. The sailors now stood waiting beside the ropes.

The shout from the lookout was not the expected order.

"Man overboard! Starboard! Shark!"

Movement was instantaneous—everywhere at once. The large, shining fin cutting through the water was clearly visible. A moment of confusion at the rail. Then shouts:

"There! There!"

"Let 'er go!" And the rope went swirling out toward a scarcely distinguishable dot on the waves.

"God pity 'im!" The rough men breathed a prayer for the poor soul whose fate was all too clear. The shark was headed for that dot.

In that instant something flashed over their heads. It was a javelin hurled unerringly from the lookout. The next moment a whirlpool was turning the sea to foam as the shark thrashed about—churning the water. The javelin was buried deep in its back. Another flash. The second javelin hurled by the African was fastened to a rope in the fashion of a harpoon. It, too, found its mark. Now the huge fish was caught. It curved into the air, writhing and twisting. But the javelin held fast as the rope grew taut. El Negre dropped to the deck, the rope wrapped around his mighty arm. Other hands laid hold and the water turned red with blood as the shark struggled.

They finally pulled a small, naked boy out of the bloody water. He was more dead than alive—shaking, gasping, sputtering. The men guffawed with laughter.

"It's a minnow!"

"Shiver me timbers! We drag in a minnow!"

A sharp spank on his buttocks sent the boy's blood racing through chilled veins. Strange faces wavered and merged above him. The roaring in his ears receded. He tried to speak but only wheezed. Then he saw his father's blazing eyes above the angry beard.

Not until Dessaible had helped make fast the shark did he turn toward the group surrounding the small boy. Suddenly with a cry he swept them aside.

"*Tu!* What are you doing here? How dare you . . . ?"

The boy was trembling but he pulled himself up. "Sir," he gasped, "the Spaniards! 'Tis the Spaniards!" He pointed. "Burning! Killing!"

The thin voice cracked while the men leaned forward straining to hear. "Their ships there—behind the rocks—waiting!"

They sprang into action. "The captain! Tell the captain!" Someone ran quickly.

But the mate held the boy's arm. His voice shook.

"Your mother? Where is Ma-ma?"

The dark eyes looked into his. The boy's lips quivered.

"Sir," he said in a hoarse whisper, "I tried—I tried to get her out. They—they—killed her."

Then he crumpled on the deck.

2

Jean Baptiste Finds a Friend

The black hawk on the dirty banner fluttered like a live bird as the ship skimmed across the waves. El Negre quickly hoisted a French flag above the banner and posted a watch high up in the crow's nest. He was to hail the first French ship sighted. It was, however, two days before they came up alongside another vessel flying the French flag. News of the disaster which had befallen Haiti was communicated and the second ship turned off her route to find additional help. By the end of the week the *Black Sea Gull* was once more sailing toward Port de Paix with a small fleet headed by a frigate belonging to His Majesty's Navy. In short order they sank one of the Spanish galleons and sent the others scurrying northward.

When the crew landed, the pirates were hailed as heroes. Over mugs of rum they told the stories which became more elaborate with each telling. Everybody now heard how small Jean Baptiste swam out into the sea to warn them and how he was miraculously saved from the shark. Planters and traders patted the little boy on the head; women hugged and kissed him.

Pointe Dessaible pretended to scowl at all this, but pride for his motherless boy stirred in his heart. Though no one was waiting now at St. Marc they went to the hamlet, walked through the trampled garden and came to the charred ruins. A few scrawny chickens, squawking hungrily, ran toward the boy.

Victims of the raid had been buried together in the churchyard. There was no way of knowing which was his Suzanne's grave. After a while the big man led the boy away. Back there in the garden he made a vow: Henceforth this child with Suzanne's dark eyes was his legal son and heir. Two weeks later they were on board the ship *Le Roi* headed for France.

The next few weeks with their unfamiliar sights and sounds and smells ran together in confusion for the boy. The tumultuous landing amid shouts, heavy carts, tall, overhanging buildings and hurrying people bewildered him. He pressed close to the big, taciturn man who offered no word of explanation or assurance. Indeed, the swarthy, tattooed sailor was almost as confused as the boy. His wide, rolling gait bumped him into startled passers-by and the hard pavement soon hurt feet crammed into unaccustomed boots. But he stuck grimly to his purpose.

The sympathetic mate of the ship *Le Roi* had recommended a school in St. Cloud—not far from Paris.

"L'École de Saint Thomas is exactly what you want," he told the embarrassed pirate. "The boy'll get all that's coming to him there—and no nonsense about it."

After reaching St. Cloud there was no difficulty locating the school. It could be seen from any part of the town. As they approached the iron grille in the high stone wall Dessaible caught himself thinking that it resembled nothing so much as an armed fort. He tossed off any uneasiness. This school meant education —and education the boy must have.

The *frères* of Saint Thomas showed neither surprise nor restraint in welcoming the strangely assorted pair.

"His name?" asked Père Michel, bending over the register.

At the father's response Père Michel commented, "A fine old French name." He wrote in his delicate, precise script: *Jean Baptiste de Sable.*

The short interview ended with Pointe Dessaible producing a small sack of gold coins.

"I will send more when this is used up."

"God bless you, my son," said Père Michel. "Have no fear for the lad's welfare. Come, my child." And he took the little boy's hand in his.

Jean Baptiste looked up into the tanned, rough face so hidden behind the great, fiery beard. Stern gray eyes met his. The boy waited anxiously. Surely now the big man would say something to *him*—just to him!

"*Eh bien, Jean, au revoir!*" The father's voice was gruff. "Mind your manners."

The high gate clanked shut behind him. As the priest led him away the boy was content. His father had said "au revoir" not "adieu." That meant he would see him again.

Jean Baptiste's appearance in the long hall created a ripple of excitement. Pupils squirmed in their seats, eyes wide with interest waiting for the bell to release them. Those who had been fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of the two upon arrival swelled with importance. At the first opportunity older boys were at the porter who admitted them, plying him with questions.

Only Jacque Clemorgan remained aloof. The attitude of this one pupil indicated indifference with a bit of scorn for all the fuss. He might have spared himself the effort since the other boys gave him scant attention. They were too interested in the newcomer. As a matter of fact the curly-headed blond boy was filled with consternation. *Another boy from the West Indies!* And a *Negro!* He did not voice repugnance, partly because of his own uncertainty, plus shame at his feelings, and partly because he thought he caught Père Michel's eyes fastened on him with watchful intensity.

Nothing about Jacque Clemorgan's appearance set him apart from the other boys. But he was from Martinique, a small island south of Haiti. Though French was the language spoken on his island as well as in Haiti, Jacque's speech had at first sounded very queer to his schoolmates. When they labeled him *étrange* he concealed his hurt under haughty disdain. He burned with desire to be exactly like them—in speech and manners and clothes. He watched and listened closely and time had repaid his efforts. For this reason he had been sent away—to become a gentleman, a Frenchman. He must remember only what a *gentleman* should know—forget everything else—particularly the plantation cabin in which he had been born. *Now here was this dark boy from Haiti!*

"*C'est américain!*" the boys were shouting. "Jacque, he is like you—from America. Is it not droll?"

"He is not like me." Jacque spoke sharply. "Idiot! Does he look like me?"

Young Phillip regarded the taller boy solemnly. He shook his head.

"No. No, he does not. His skin is dark—very dark." Suddenly his eyes sparkled. "Are not Indians thus brown?" He called out, "Hey there, *mes amis*—ask him—ask him! Is he an Indian?"

"You're crazy," snapped Jacque, leaving them.

Jean Baptiste was unaware of any conflict. The boys with whom he had run and fished and swam in Haiti were just as rough and far more noisy than these boys from the various provinces of France. Weeks with the sailors on the *Black Sea Gull* had given him self-reliance and he had become accustomed to being stared at and questioned. He was confident that his father had not banished him from the ship through displeasure. This new and strenuous life was a matter of "schooling"—something which seemed to be of much importance to grownups. But then he himself was growing up. This, it seemed now, was a serious business. Even his mother had sent him twice a week for "instructions" to Père Le Mons. But how different that was! *Round, shining face under the flapping palmetto—droning of bees and bright, multicolored butterflies flitting about the garden.* Jean Baptiste swallowed the lump in his throat and tried not to think of the high stone wall, rusty bars and hard bench. But was there no sun in all France?

September had slipped by. A heavy, gray chill settled over everything, stripping the few scrawny trees and falling like a blight upon the countryside. Now only Jacque Clemorgan understood the new boy's dismay. He had shivered through one winter in France. Even worse than the cold had been his feeling of utter loneliness. The other boys had never felt real sunshine hot on their backs. They didn't know what blue skies were—and as for sparkling waters changing colors every hour of the day . . . Bah! These country fellows!

The dark boy knew! Irresistibly Jacque Clemorgan was drawn to this other boy from the Caribbean Islands whose homesickness he shared. He saw the bright eyes grow bleak, saw his lips turn purple with cold, saw him shrink within himself as he wandered through dark, musty halls. He made no complaint and to himself Jacque commended his fellow islander's grit. But whenever he came across him standing before one of the high, narrow windows—or in the paved court looking up at the pale patch of distant sky—the boy from Martinique knew the other's misery.

Jean Baptiste could never have imagined anything so horrible as the creeping cold. He was certain he would die. Longing for the sun consumed him. If only he could see it glistening on the waves! If only he could smell a flower! Finally the night came when he stuffed bedclothes into his mouth to smother his sobs. They shook his whole frame. He could bear his pain no longer.

He felt rather than heard somebody bending over him. A warm hand lay on his shoulder. Gradually he was no longer racked and torn. The pressure of that hand sent warmth through his chilled body. He knew then that someone sat on the side of his cot. He heard the whisper close to his ear:

"That's better, lad. Now, chuck it! I know how 'tis."

Jean Baptiste's fingers curled about the fingers that found his. Only an occasional tremor shook him. He did not bother to ask who this was in the darkness. Enough that somebody who understood was near.

They both heard the shuffling step and rustle of a robe coming along the hall. Then Père Michel was in the doorway. By the light of the candle he held in his hand Père Michel could see the two cots in the narrow room. Both were occupied as they should be but near one now stood the tall, blond boy clad only in his night clothes. His voice was stern.

"What are you doing out of your room at this hour of the night, Jacque? Why aren't you asleep?"

Jacque tried to draw himself up haughtily.

"I thought I heard this fellow groaning. Perhaps he is ill."

At this the priest came closer. The boy on the second cot stirred in his sleep, disturbed by the light. Jean Baptiste sat up.

"Sir," he said huskily, lifting a tear-stained face, "I was feeling . . ." His eyes wavered. "I did make a noise," he finished lamely.

"Are you in pain, Jean?" Père Michel laid his hand on the boy's head.

"Oh, no, Father," came the low answer.

Jacque had moved back into the shadows. He spoke with some hesitation.

"He could, er—the new boy could sleep in my room, Father. There is a spare bed since Pierre du Bois went home last week."

Père Michel did not turn to look at him.

"You wish this, Jacque?"

Jacque shrugged his shoulders.

"The cot is empty," he said indifferently, then strolled through the door and disappeared in the darkness.

Père Michel saw the look on Jean Baptiste's face.

"Do you want to share his room, my son?"

"Oh, yes! Yes, Father."

"Then, come!"

So in the middle of the night Jean Baptiste's few belongings were gathered up. The candle fluttered and sputtered and funny shadows danced on the walls. Holding the candle high, Père Michel led the way to Jacque's room. They found Jacque stretched out on his own cot. The second cot was neatly folded back as if waiting for the new occupant.

"Here you are, Jean. Jump in!"

Jean Baptiste obeyed Père Michel without a word, pulling the covers up to his chin. For a moment the priest bent over him. Then taking up his candle he turned toward the door.

"Now, boys, go to sleep. Bless you and a good night."

"Good night, Father." The two voices blended.

The flickering light was swallowed up in darkness. The boys lay very still. Then came the whisper:

"Good night, Jacque."

"Good night, yourself! And, I say, when the snow comes you'll like it. The snow is beautiful."

"Snow? What is snow, Jacque?"

"You'll see!"

With a little sigh of content Jean Baptiste closed his eyes.

3

Shipwrecked

April 12, 1764. N. Lat. 29° W. Long. 89° 15′. Can see coast of New France. . . .

The moving quill paused. The chronicler looked down at the page and smiled. *New France!* This is what proud Frenchmen called Louisiana. For here in the New World up from the delta of its mightiest river, embracing all lands drained by this river and its tributaries, extended a new empire—opened up and claimed by French explorers and rapidly being settled by Frenchmen. Here near the mouth of the river they had planted a city and named it after the ancient seat of the kings of France—Orleans. French boys dreamed of journeying across the ocean to New France! Danger! Adventure! Indians and buffaloes; great forests filled with game and streams alive with fish! Their fathers dreamed of staking out claims of fertile land, of furs, of cypress, pine and oak. Poor men exchanged their freedom for passage to this new world of opportunity. Even from the nearby West Indies ambitious speculators looked toward the continent.

"Go to Louisiana," Pointe Dessaible advised his son. "We're crowded here. New France is the place for a young man. Give yourself to that undeveloped land; nourish and cherish her. Then the land is yours!"

How were they to know in the Caribbean that once more kings and princes in Europe were dividing and distributing the land of the New World among themselves? And this time they dealt not merely with islands but with the continent itself.

For France had lost a war. Great Britain therefore exacted from her Canada and all lands east of the Mississippi River, while she was forced to cede all lands west of the Mississippi and the city of New Orleans (which was actually on the eastern bank) to Spain. With the exception of two small islands off the coast of Newfoundland there was no "New France" in all of North America on April 12, 1764.

But news reached the frontiers of the world slowly in those days. Here was Jean Baptiste de Sable, commander of his own ship, writing in his logbook that he lay in the Gulf of Mexico just off the coast of Louisiana. Little did he suspect that on this same day a courier was setting out from Madrid with papers which would eventually be delivered in New Orleans from a Spanish warship instructing the garrison there that it belonged to Spain. Of course no one in Louisiana had been consulted regarding this transaction and for months the Spanish princes had conferred as to how the transfer could be accomplished without disrupting the flow of trade in and out of that port.

Still no wind. Barometer . . .

The quill resumed its course across the page. A shadow falling over his desk caused the captain to look up. Nine years had done little to alter dark eyes, though nose and mouth were now prominent and patches of short, curly hair sprouted on cheeks and chin. The broad mouth smiled as he saw who it was blocking the narrow doorway. The lean figure almost doubled itself under the deck beams to peer into the tiny cabin.

"Ah! There you are, my captain! How can you breathe in that hole? Come out! I want to talk to you."

Same old Jacque! Even on my ship he gives me orders! The thought brought a rueful crinkle to the bright eyes but there was no annoyance in the voice which responded:

"A moment! I'll soon finish with this." Then for a time there was only the scratching of the quill.

Jean Baptiste was young to be a navigator. But he discharged his duties with the certainty and dispatch of one well accustomed to responsibilities. His father had left the *Suzanne* to him. He had brought the trim little schooner through the Caribbean Sea without mishap. But here they were becalmed at the very mouth of the Mississippi River.

Five months before, the elder Pointe Dessaible had outwitted the fate prophesied for all pirates and died peacefully in his own bed. Furthermore, his last years had been exceedingly good.

Except for placing the boy in school, Dessaible's only trip back to France had been a disappointment. The little town high up in the Pyrenees failed to reclaim its wandering son. After leaving Jean Baptiste at Saint Thomas he traveled southward. Judged by the standards of that section he was a rich man. There was no reason why he should not go back and as he approached the place of his birth the rush of memories was sweet. But wary kinsmen viewed him with suspicion. This one who had been away so long was a stranger. *Why do you come back now?* They asked the question as if he would take something from them. And so after visiting the grave of his father Pointe Dessaible left. He knew he would never return. This time he sailed directly to Santo Domingo. Here was his home.

Within the year Pointe Dessaible was known throughout the Artibonite Valley as a dealer in coffee, wood and indigo. Carts traveled between his acres of land in St. Marc and his shop in the port of Cap Français. Two years later the boy returned and the trader had a sign made which he proudly nailed over the door of his shop: DE SABLE ET FILS. Jean Baptiste regarded the sign with shining eyes and repeated the words over and over to himself: "De Sable and Son."

Now as he filled in the account in his logbook the son wished his father could have lived to see New France. This was his father's wish. He would . . .

"Zounds, man! Is there no end to your scratching? 'Twould seem we have anchored in this gulf. When do we get on?" Outside the door Jacque Clemorgan stamped impatiently on the deck.

With a little start the captain saw that his entry was thoroughly dried. He closed the log and stood up, not, however, to his full height. The low ceiling forced him to stoop. Though his frame was not yet filled out it was evident that he would be a big man like his father. As he came out onto the deck he shaded his eyes with his hand.

The sun beat down relentlessly. Quivering waves of heat rose from the scorched deck while the ship bobbed like a cork on the blue expanse. Ahead through a break in the coast line the Mississippi pumped its thick, yellow stream.

"How long do you think this will last?" Clemorgan motioned toward the sails hanging like limp, dirty rags from the peeling masts.

"God knows," was the heavy response.

The first man cursed softly. He wore a broad-brimmed hat against the sun's rays and the weave of his soft, white blouse was very fine. Jacque Clemorgan carried himself with indolent ease, as befitted the son of a wealthy planter. He had remained in France three years after Jean Baptiste's return. His last year was in Paris where he received the finishing touches for becoming a "gentleman." The neophyte's return to Martinique had meant only uneasiness and discomfort for everybody concerned. The harassed father was only too glad to outfit the young man for an expedition to Louisiana in company with the Haitian trader. *De Sable et Fils* did business in Martinique.

"The continent's the place for big traders." De Sable's enthusiasm was infectious. "Fortunes to be made in furs alone. Valuable wood rots on the ground. It's a whole rich continent, Jacque. Father planned to sell out and get on the mainland. He said that's where the future lies. All a man needs is a little guts."

So here were the two friends in sight of the marshes which extend along the coast line of Louisiana. They could see the long stretch of white beaches behind which rose a crest of green forest. Nouvelle Orléans, their port, was some miles up that wide, muddy stream. But with no wind it was impossible to plow through that three-knot current.

"*Eh bien!* We can wait." De Sable smiled whimsically. "There's plenty of time. America will not run away."

Clemorgan spat over the rail without bothering to say anything. Glancing up through the screen of his fingers, De Sable's interest was captured by a flock of brown pelicans flying in a V shape and flapping their wings in unison. They cast dark shadows on the waters.

"That is queer," he murmured.

"What," asked Clemorgan, following his gaze, "that the birds can manage to fly when we're stuck here?"

"It's the direction they're taking." De Sable spoke slowly, his eyes following the flight. "Why should they be going—Yes, what is it?" He broke off as his mate suddenly appeared.

"Captain! Glass is acting queer. Looks like we're in for a squall!"

Clemorgan noted the captain's start and how he glanced quickly once more after the disappearing pelicans.

"Let me see!" Without another word he hurried off with the mate.

Clemorgan stepped back into the shade of the cabin. He took off his hat and wiped his face and neck with a large handkerchief.

"Phew!" he muttered irritably, "how I'd welcome a good, brisk squall!"

As the afternoon wore away the heat became more oppressive. A halo encircled the sun, making a wafer in the colorless haze which rose from the water. Then bands of alternate red and violet striped the western sky where a livid sun hung above the horizon. An unexpected wind tugged at the sails and out of nowhere appeared heavy smokestacks of purple clouds. Clemorgan felt the deck under his feet vibrate as the broad sea of water began to churn.

No one saw the sunset. As men rushed up the rigging to reef the topsails darkness dropped like a thick blanket—blotting out sky, sea and nearby coast. Then came swift, angry rain like a million small, hard pebbles flung from the sky. The *Suzanne* trembled and shook like a hurt animal.

On the topmost deck Captain de Sable braced his legs and tightened his grip on the wheel. Spray and rain stung his face as he fought to carry his ship over the top of each advancing wave. The tiller ropes groaned and strained. As the fury of the storm increased and the waves rose, De Sable's mouth set in desperate lines. Forward hands were at work on the pumps. The captain's keen ears could catch the flat clatter of them. That meant the ship's seams were gaping and closing like mouths.

"Good girl, *Suzanne!*" He shouted the words aloud as the vessel successfully topped a foaming ridge. He felt rather than heard someone behind him. Without daring to turn his head he yelled: "Get below, Jacque. You'll be washed overboard!"

"I'm staying with you!"

Clemorgan's answer was snatched away by the wind. De Sable did not hear it. He was gazing in horror at a gigantic column of foamy water bearing down upon them. This was no wave! This was nothing he could top. As the *Suzanne* soared, whirling upward, the two friends were thrown together into the riggings. They clung there while an unearthly howling filled all their consciousness.

The *Suzanne* split asunder and the hurricane scattered its parts over the sand and shell ridges bordering the gulf. Then, as if satisfied with its sport, the deadly column changed its course and blew itself out over the keys of Florida.

In due time the sun came up, serenely ignoring the havoc of the night. It shone warm and bright, sweeping the clouds from the sky and quieting all the restless, tossing waves that licked over the Mississippi Delta. The water receded from grass and rushes and gathered in thousands of shallow lakes and lagoons. Logs came to life in the dirty eddies—becoming alligators crawling toward the sun; huge turtles paddled through the ooze and bleached, marrowless bones of the forest drifted in the slow swirling. The sun warmed a sodden heap flung on the beach. The heap moved and groaned. A man turned on his back and let the warm sun fall on his face.

De Sable opened his eyes, then closed them quickly as pain shot through his head. He lay quiet and the pain receded but the roaring in his ears persisted. Slowly and painfully he groped his way back to consciousness. *Storm! My ship!*

He sat up and clenched his teeth in the effort to keep from falling back. His senses whirled in space but after a moment the world around him settled into place. He saw water lapping at his feet and crawled a little higher on the wet sand. Then raising himself he looked around. The sea was empty—nothing except white-topped waves dancing in the sunlight. The beach extending on either side was a ribbon of white sand with here and there a narrow bar pushing out into the water. No sign of habitation. Nothing. He gave a start. There was something! Some distance off the sand bar to the left something bobbed in the water. It looked like a mast. His legs wobbled under him but he forced himself almost to a run.

Part of the *Suzanne*'s rigging lay out there on the water. He stood on the sand bar gazing with a frozen face at the almost submerged mast. This was a horrible dream! He would wake up in his bunk! He closed his eyes. *Isn't that old Limpy calling?* His eyes snapped open.

"Help! Save me! Help!"

The feeble voice seemed to come from the waves. *Dear God, somebody's out there! Somebody's alive out there!*

The plunge cleared his head. A few long, powerful strokes brought him to the rigging. A man clung there—a man whose curly hair fell over his face. But De Sable's heart leaped!

"Jacque!"

"My leg! It's caught! Help!" His eyes were glazed. It was evident he had been saying the words over and over. Now he did not know that help was at hand.

Working rapidly underwater, De Sable tore at the rigging. He felt the strong tug of the tide and realized that only Clemorgan's efforts had prevented the mast from being dragged out to sea. Finally the pincerlike grip of the crosspieces was broken. De Sable brought his almost unconscious friend ashore. Hardly had he dragged him up onto the sand than mast and riggings sank from view.

His own strength left him. For a while the two lay without moving—stretched out on the sand. Enough for the moment just to be alive.

4

Up the Mississippi

The unhappy De Sable roamed up and down the beach, poking into seaweed, peering into tiny caves and scanning the water. Surely there were other survivors! His heart ached as he thought of the little cabin boy—so frisky, so full of life. All his fine crew gone. Not another sign of the ill-fated ship which bore his mother's name!

Slowly he retraced his steps to the sand bar and some of the weight lifted. Jacque is safe! *At least I did not take my friend down in my ship.* And he breathed a little prayer of thanksgiving.

The discovery that Jacque Clemorgan's leg was broken dampened the two friends' joy at being reunited. After his vain attempt to stand, Clemorgan lay white and gasping on the sand. De Sable sat by his side trying to think—trying to ward off this new blow.

The sun was high now. Soon it would be unbearably hot. The only living things they saw were pelicans circling in the sky over their heads and an occasional crab creeping sideways in the sand. Their throats were parched with thirst and they were beginning to feel pangs of hunger. With a groan the injured man turned over and shaded his face. De Sable spoke quickly:

"I'll carry you up to those trees." He indicated the ridge back of them over which the tops of trees could be seen.

"You can't carry me to New Orleans," Clemorgan said gloomily. "And you'd best be starting in that direction."

De Sable looked toward the sea and shook his head.

"Everything I had in the world was on the *Suzanne*. What can I do now in New Orleans?"

"Nonsense!" Pain made his friend irritable. "Identify yourself! A trader can always get credit."

"Easy for you to talk, Jacque. You have only to write your father. A black man must have coins in his hand." The bitterness in De Sable's voice was unusual.

Clemorgan looked hard at the dark, moody face. He opened his mouth as if to say something, then turned away.

After a moment the other man hunched his shoulders and smiled.

"We'll make it! Come on! Up on my back! Swing your arm around my neck and hold tight." He crouched down.

It took some effort and De Sable staggered when on his feet. Clemorgan clung to him as children do when playing "piggy-back." The distance across the beach was longer than it had seemed to be. They stopped and rested at the foot of the hill but the climb was very hard. At the top of the ridge De Sable gently lowered his burden to the ground, then sank down panting. Like desert travelers on the edge of an oasis they feasted their eyes.

Before them, rising from a green slope, rose great trees covered with moss—and through the trees they could see a wide river. In the distance it spread out over flatland into tiny lakes, but here was the main stream clearly defined. They knew then they had not been blown off their course. This was the Mississippi, main highway for all of Louisiana. Ships passed this way frequently. Every planter had his own boat; traders moved about in canoes. Any minute somebody would come along and pick them up.

Had they really been aware of the many kinds of deaths lurking in those coastal lagoons they would not have rested so contentedly on the cool, soft moss. De Sable's chief concern was Jacque's leg which was swelling rapidly. He bound it with cool, damp leaves. They drank deep of water without noticing its bad odor. Close beside the river De Sable discovered pecan and mango trees. They cracked the nuts with their teeth and ate their fill of sweet, luscious fruit. In spite of everything it was good to be alive and together.

But as the second day of waiting dragged by De Sable's confidence drained away. Help must come soon. Clemorgan was burning with fever and pain racked his whole body. Then out of the fading, last long rays of the sun a ship came slowly around the bend. De Sable leaped to his feet.

"Jacque! It's come! A ship's coming!" He leaned over and wiped beads of sweat from the sick man's forehead. "Listen, Jacque, I'm swimming out to meet it. Can't take chances of them passing us by. Understand, Jacque? I'm going to the ship."

The man on the ground smiled and his brow was spotted with moisture. Each word was an effort.

"Yes! Yes, Jean Baptiste. Good boy! Go—quickly!"

Mr. Lawson, chief mate of the Danish vessel *Helsingor*, expected to see weird sights in America. This was his first trip to that fabulous land and he considered himself prepared for anything. He was leaning against the rail wondering what this Orleans in the New World they were approaching would be like when he was suddenly startled out of his wits. Something dark and shining leaped out of the water, seized a rope which should not have been hanging over the side and was nimbly climbing to the deck! The chief mate opened his mouth to shout that they were being attacked by some extraordinarily bold wild animal when the creature scrambled over the railing and he saw it was a man—a black man jabbering some strange, outlandish tongue! While he stared in amazement an assuring thought flashed upon him. A slave! A poor runaway slave! Instead of crying out he merely backed off. He waved his arms and attempted to soothe the creature's terror:

"There, there! There, there! Quiet! Quiet! Don't be afraid!"

It quickly became evident to De Sable that he had run into a language difficulty. He therefore turned from this gaping officer and made his way toward the bridge where in all probability he'd find the ship's captain. The officer ran behind him still waving his arms and shouting.

Coming out on the bridge De Sable blessed his good fortune. The man who turned his bristling face toward him was undoubtedly the captain. De Sable bowed and spoke with the utmost politeness:

"*Monsieur le Capitaine*, I beg your pardon for intruding. But, sir—do you speak French?"

Captain Jensen knew enough French to understand the question. While the sudden appearance of this half-naked dark man trailing mud on his white deck was amazing enough, it did not occur to the captain that he was a runaway slave. Captain Jensen had seen slaves.

"*Un moment*," he answered sternly in French. Before he could say more they were joined by the panting mate.

"Captain!" He pointed a shaking finger. "Captain, this—this—" The words choked in his throat as the black man turned a smiling face to him.

"Very well, Mr. Lawson," interrupted the captain. "We'll soon find out what this is about. Send Steward Leban to me." Claud Leban was French.

The Danish words conveyed nothing to De Sable but he saw the subordinate officer hurry away and knew there was nothing for him to do but wait. He could have spoken a little English or Spanish—though he hated that tongue—but here was a difficulty to which he had given no thought. He glanced toward the shore. The ship was almost opposite the spot where Jacque Clemorgan lay waiting.

"*Monsieur le Capitaine*," he began again. But the captain shook his head and raised his hand for silence.

Captain Jensen saw the dark man sway as if from exhaustion and he pointed to a stool. But the man made a gesture indicating his muddy body with its dripping rags and shook his head. They stood silent until the mate returned, followed by a second man.

Then it was the steward's turn to stare when the captain said brusquely:

"This man speaks French. Question him!"

His eyes opened wider when—before the first question was out of his mouth—the strange visitor launched into a tale of shipwreck!

In no time at all a lifeboat was lowered and the injured man brought on board. De Sable told them who Jacque Clemorgan was and said it seemed he was the only surviving passenger from his lost ship. In a weak but firm voice Clemorgan told how the captain had saved his life. Steward Leban swelled with importance in his capacity as interpreter and the whole ship hummed with excitement. And so at last they were once more moving toward New Orleans.

That night the dark man paced the deck unable to sleep. His heart was heavy. Instead of sailing his own *Suzanne* into the famous port he would enter on another man's ship, with a crew whose tongue he could not understand. He was a beggar—wearing another's clothes, eating the food of charity. He had nothing.

At daybreak the first signs of human life beyond the world of the ship began to appear. Bronze, shaggy traders rowed their pirogues out of the bayous and approached the vessel. They scurried up down-flung rope ladders and in some mysterious manner managed to barter furs and fruit for schnapps and pottery. The sign language of traders is the same everywhere.

De Sable climbed the mainmast for a view of the port into which the vessel was finally slipping. He felt a humidity that plastered the back of his shirt to his skin. Beyond a bend in the mighty river the new town came into view. It was a fortified garrison. Skiffs, long canoes, rotting flatboats jammed against the clutter of fishing shacks, platforms and shops that formed the wharf. But behind all this rose a thick wooden wall topped with spikes. De Sable saw with astonishment that New Orleans was completely surrounded by this wall. The large square in the center with palm trees was the only open space he could see. Around the square were a squat but pretentious white building, a church with dome and spire and two other structures which might be a rectory and a hospital. They rose above the small flat sea of roofs. There seemed to be no room for boulevards or even streets. But beyond the crowded enclosure roads wound between green fields dotted with large houses set in clusters of trees. Farther away, a long golden lake glimmered in the sunshine.

So this was New Orleans! As his feet touched the deck once more the booming of a cannon caused De Sable to look around in alarm. At his elbow Steward Leban explained:

"The cannon in Fort St. Charles announces our docking."

Captain Jensen invited Monsieur Clemorgan to remain on board while the *Helsingor* lay in port. The injured man readily accepted the invitation. The week of quiet would go a long way toward speeding his recovery. While the leg now neatly set in splints would give him some bad hours, this morning the patient was in good spirits.

"The riches of America are still here, Jean Baptiste. And you have the guts!"

De Sable looked down at his friend and smiled. He was about to go ashore.

"I'll seek out Bontemps and Colbert first as I had planned to do. Only now, instead of bargaining with them, perhaps I'll ask for a job."

"Good luck, my friend!"

The dark man's mouth was set in determined lines as he descended the gangplank and made his way through the kegs of rum, bales of cotton, boxes, small carts, balky mules, cursing teamsters and sweating humanity that crowded the docks. The *Helsingor* was being unloaded. Its few passengers had gone through the gate into the city. As he approached, De Sable saw people passing to and fro under the indifferent eyes of two men in uniform who leaned against the wall. One of the soldiers apparently was watching him. As he was about to pass through the gate this soldier called out sharply:

"You, there! Stop!"

De Sable obeyed and silently looked toward the soldier.

"Your name?"

"Jean Baptiste . . ." he began haughtily, then stopped.

"Where from?"

"I just came off that ship." He indicated the vessel being unloaded at the dock.

"Oh." Then indifferently, "Proceed!"

He forced himself to walk leisurely but his heart was pounding. This spelled danger! No need to ask why the soldier had challenged him alone of those going through the gate. *He was a strange Negro.* Stories of free Negroes being seized and sold into slavery flashed through his mind. He realized now that it would have been wiser to have asked someone to accompany him into the city. How was he to *prove* his identity? He had no address for Bontemps and Colbert. Their boats loaded with furs came from New Orleans to Santo Domingo. His father had traded with them. Neither Bontemps nor Colbert had ever seen *him.* Would they believe his story even if he located them? He could, of course, get a letter from Captain Jensen declaring how he had picked up the two survivors. And there was Jacque—*a white man.*

Somewhat reassured he began taking note of his surroundings. On each side were two- and three-story buildings with small wrought-iron galleries projecting over the sidewalk and wooden stoops of four or five steps jutting out into the street. He saw why no streets had been visible when he first looked down upon the city. The thoroughfares were so narrow that two carts would have difficulty in passing each other beneath the overhanging galleries. This street seemed to lead into a plaza of some kind. He quickened his steps and was nearing the end when he stopped suddenly and pressed back against the wall while every muscle grew taut. Entering the narrow street was something he had never seen before yet instantly recognized. He heard the chains clank, heard a coarse shout and the snap of a whip as the coffle of slaves dragged its weight over the cobblestones—black men and women chained together. He saw their faces as they approached and the blood drained from his face. He saw the red stripes on their bowed backs. He heard their heavy breathing and he felt himself gasping for breath. At the very end a little child clung to the tattered skirt of a woman who carried a baby in her arms.

He did not move until they had disappeared. Then he ran—ran from the street as if he were pursued. For the first time in his life Jean Baptiste de Sable felt stark fear! His fear was blind and unreasoning—compounded of hate and desolation and a feeling that every man's hand was against him.

Then crossing the plaza was a black-robed figure whose broad hat flapped about his face. With an exclamation of relief, De Sable hurried toward the priest.

"Father, I am in great trouble!"

Father Manuel looked up with lackluster eyes. His frown came as much from the glare of the sun as from irritation at having been snatched away from pleasant reverie. He regarded the dark young male—taking in the good, clean clothes which included shoes. Certainly this one had been neither starved nor beaten. As for trouble—who in this ungodly swamp did not have trouble? He asked wearily:

"What is it, now?"

De Sable's keen eyes had noted the frayed edges of the rusty, spotted robe, the pallid, lined face and the two dark circles. Abruptly he veered from what he started to say. His agile mind leaped from one thought to another.

"Father," he said quickly, "the gentleman who summoned me here has disappeared. I can offer no explanation. But here I am, stranded and without work."

"Where are you from?" asked the priest.

"I'm from . . ." he began. Then the dark face was illumined by a bright smile. "I am from L'École de Saint Thomas."

The priest's sagging shoulders jerked.

"What?" he asked, a smile breaking into his voice. "The school in St. Cloud?"

"Yes, Father."

"Why—why—" Excitement caused Father Manuel to stutter. "What—what—were you going—to—to—"

"Isn't there a school here, Father?" The young man broke in to ward off any questioning. "I can do many things. Don't you need help in the school—or hospital?"

Did they need help? Father Manuel raised his eyes to heaven. This was indeed a miracle! Not in the thickest wilds of darkest Africa was help more needed than right here. And a boy from St. Cloud! He blessed the untrustworthy gentleman. What was his name? No matter. A great load was slipping off his back. Father Manuel beamed.

"Come with me, my son. The good Lord Himself has sent you!" Dust clouds twirled about his feet as the priest tripped across the square.

It was a guilty Jean Baptiste, who followed after. But the man's fears were gone. He had found refuge.

I'll have a place to sleep tonight was the thought foremost in his mind.

5

Flight to St. Louis

Nobody in New Orleans really believed it. New Orleans was French—its inhabitants loyal Frenchmen. The king simply could not give their city to Spain!

Rumors and crazy stories had been circulating for months. The mail pack brought confusing letters but Europe was far away and what happened along the Atlantic seaboard was of little concern to the people on the Gulf of Mexico. Louisiana planters spat with disgust when anyone mentioned the British. Spain? Of course Spain had to be reckoned with. But this ancient enemy was now a friend. Trade with Mexico was growing. Traders wanted to do business with Spain but Spaniards couldn't think of taking over. Men argued in the coffee shops, up and down Dumaine Street and in the Place d'Armes. Warehouses on Chartres Street were emptied by frantic traders, leaving angry planters to return to their houses in the bayous without goods. At home on their wide, cool verandas the planters laughed at their own annoyance. Traders were easily frightened. The whole idea was ridiculous!

But the morning came when Governor Aubrey of Louisiana sat motionless in his room. He had ordered the raising of a Spanish flag over the Cabildo.

There had been no shots fired, no marching soldiers, no harsh commands. Everything was done quietly and with good manners. The governor-general and the commander of the garrison had their instructions from Paris. They had envisioned the great

Mississippi Valley united with the St. Lawrence to form a mighty empire for France. Instead, they were to turn over their beloved New Orleans to the Spaniards while Great Britain took possession of all Canada. Perhaps only half a dozen men in all Louisiana knew the bitter terms of the Treaty of Paris—knew that France had been excluded from North America. But these men tightened their lips. They were told that as long as no resistance was offered everything would proceed as before—nothing would be changed. They did not believe this. While they secretly sold their holdings in preparation for flight, thoughts of dungeons haunted them. Arrival of the courier on the Spanish warship was actually a mere formality which set the seal on a *fait accompli.*

Probably the only tranquil individuals in New Orleans were the Jesuits. A change in temporal authority meant nothing to them. And since Jean Baptiste was fully occupied in working for them his mind, too, was undisturbed.

By the time the penitent young man confessed his white lie to Father Manuel his willingness to work and his many skills had made him so valuable that it is doubtful whether the good priest bothered the Lord with this small sin. Father Manuel continued to bless whatever circumstances brought Jean Baptiste to them.

About noon on the day the Spanish flag was raised over New Orleans Jean Baptiste arrived in the city from the plantation to take care of a shipment of dye which had left the evening before piled on flat-bottomed boats. Jean Baptiste had traveled overland on horseback.

It was a perfect morning. After the rains and before the coming of torrid suns the air was sweet and fresh. Cross and trumpet vines were in bloom with here and there white sprays of dogwood, while in the Spanish moss that hung from the big trees were tiny lilylike blossoms.

The past months had not been unpleasant though Jean Baptiste realized that all his plans had been abandoned. "Temporarily," he always said as the weeks slipped by. But now it was spring again and the prospect of his getting out on his own seemed as remote as ever.

Without any assistance from him his horse delicately picked its way through the narrow street. It seemed unusually crowded and everybody was in a frightful hurry. This was rather odd on such a pleasant morning. When he reached the Place d'Armes he noted the groups of people gathered there. In itself this was not unusual since the Place d'Armes was the most popular gathering place in town. But what was unusual was the *silence.* Something was wrong!

De Sable dismounted in front of the imposing white building which housed Louisiana's governing officials. As he did so an old man touched him on the arm and pointed. Only then did he see the unfamiliar flag flying above the colonnaded entrance. At first it meant nothing to him. He turned to the old man.

"What is . . . ?" he began. The old man lifted watery red eyes. His face was quivering. He opened his mouth but no words came. Frowning, De Sable looked again at the flag. In a flash he remembered where he had seen its like before: flying from the masts of the ships which brought the raiders to Santo Domingo.

"*Spanish!*" He spat out the word.

The old man nodded, clutched the young man's arm again and whispered:

"Tear it down! Tear it down, boy! 'Tis evil."

De Sable jerked away. He was trembling. What did this mean? Spaniards here in New Orleans? He saw now that it was toward this flag everybody was staring. Why didn't somebody do something? Where were the soldiers? Just old men whispering together! Then he noticed something else. He was the only Negro in the square. Not a single dark figure loitered under the palm trees, no flash from the bright kerchiefs the women bound around their heads, no ragged boys hanging about to run errands.

The Spaniards are here!

Thoroughly alarmed now, De Sable leapt on his horse and made his way out of the plaza as quickly as he could, his heart pounding lest he be stopped. Snatches of loud talk he had overheard ran through his mind. He recalled some grumbling along the waterfront because of the number of Spanish ships stopping on their way to Mexico. But these had been trading vessels.

He pressed his horse. He must get to the dock, attend to his business and get out of town. The stillness was worse than any turmoil. People moved about with set faces. They seemed paralyzed. Perhaps he'd try to see Jacque. The two friends seldom met because here in New Orleans Jacque Clemorgan occupied a different world—a white world.

De Sable's hand jerked. What was it Jacque said that day when they happened to meet on the wharf? They had stood together a few minutes watching a Portuguese slaver unloading its pitiful cargo.

"If only I could *do* something!" the dark man had cried out in futile misery.

He recalled Jacque's eyes blazing in his pale face—his words coming through clenched teeth:

"The Spaniards will teach these white folks what slavery means!"

A strange remark for Jacque Clemorgan to make.

Maxent, Laclade and Company of New Orleans held exclusive rights to Indian trade in the Missouri River valley and all country west of the Mississippi. The Crown had granted the company these rights in July, 1763. In August of this same year Pierre Laclade Liquest, junior partner of the firm, with some thirty other persons left New Orleans for Fort Chartres. That fall he set up a new post on a crescent-shaped bend of the Mississippi about ten miles downstream from the convergence of the Mississippi and the Missouri rivers. The location proved to be excellent. The steady flow of thick, silky pelts which Liquest sent to New Orleans was bringing the firm a steadily increasing stream of gold from the markets of Europe. Now, though business in New Orleans collapsed under foreign rule, Maxent, Laclade and Company had no intention of relinquishing that steady flow of gold, regardless of what bargains the Crown might have made elsewhere.

The company resolved therefore to send additional men to their northwestern post, which was patriotically named St. Louis after the patron saint of Louis XV. These additional forces could speed up the output and would consist of men whose loyalty to the company was certain. Word of the company's intentions had been circulated. One boat was sent up the Mississippi and another group was being rounded up. On this stifling hot July morning, however, Mr. Carteau Maxent, senior clerk, faced a problem.

The dark fellow on the other side of the desk towered over him. He was lightly bearded but the hair on his head was thick and long. It was pulled back and caught together at his neck with a string. His blue shirt, open at the neck, was soft and clean; his dark green breeches were pulled together at his waist by a black sash. Maxent had noted that he wore boots when he came in. Altogether he was a rather striking figure. And he talked in a firm, knowing voice.

"I am," he insisted, "an experienced trader. I can handle boats. I have worked with Indians. I am sure I could . . ."

Mr. Maxent interrupted. "I do not dispute you, er—a—" He glanced down at the paper upon which he had scribbled the visitor's name—"Jean Baptiste. But we cannot include you in this boat."

"Why? I was told you wanted two more men." The dark eyes did not flinch.

"Quarters are crowded. Some of the men would object." The clerk spoke bluntly. "We're not sending any slaves up there just yet."

"I am a free man!" The fellow lifted his head.

"Of course, but that makes no difference."

For a moment there was silence. Then:

"Very well! Send me independently. I can make the second boat worth your while. I'll get out among the Indians and I know my business." He was actually pleading.

"That's out of the question," snapped the man at the desk. "We want no freebooters up there. Next thing we'll have that old pirate Choctaw butting in!"

"Freebooter! Pirate!" He repeated the words slowly as if they were new to him. Then without so much as a "thank you" or "good day" the intruder stalked out of the office.

"Humph!" Mr. Maxent grunted. "Those impertinent blacks make my blood boil!"

"Weren't you a bit hard on him?" asked the older man who during the interview had sat with his back to Maxent's desk. "Unless I'm mistaken that's the fellow who handles all the Jesuits' shipping. They say he's extremely clever. Knows figures."

"No doubt, sir. But we can't have blacks running wild in that country. Hard enough to hold the Indians in check without them." As far as Maxent, Laclade and Company was concerned the incident was closed. But outside on the street Jean Baptiste de Sable was moving rapidly toward a decision. "Why not?" he asked himself. "So that pimply-faced young squirt didn't like 'pirates' and 'freebooters.' Well! Well!" The idea grew in his mind as he turned toward the waterfront where sooner or later he'd find the Indian trapper Choctaw. He knew Choctaw did not like the Spaniards any more than he did.

The next weeks were busy ones for Jean Baptiste. This was the slack season. Docks were almost deserted and everybody indulged in long, lazy siestas. So without announcing his intentions to the priests he had time to make preparations for leaving New Orleans.

Choctaw was easily persuaded to go with him. The Indian welcomed the opportunity to journey up the mighty river with someone he could trust. After many moons he might return with good news for his tribe.

There was first the matter of a large boat. Choctaw located a cottonwood tree of the right dimensions. Working together, the two men chopped at this tree all day. But the moon was high before the giant cracked and toppled over. Many more days went by while they cleared the trunk of branches and hollowed out the great log with fire. Finally they had fashioned a pirogue twenty feet long and wide enough to hold half a dozen men. Such boats were propelled by poling or rowing. But Jean Baptiste added a small upright mast to which he proposed fastening a sail.

"Sail no good on river," grunted the Indian.

"Maybe, sometime." Jean Baptiste shrugged his shoulders and grinned.

They concealed the heavy craft in a safe place where Choctaw could keep an eye on it as he skirted about the marshes in his canoe. Guns, ammunition and a small amount of supplies were needed. Jean Baptiste now went to see Father Manuel.

"I came to America to stake out land, Father. I came to build and develop something worth while—perhaps to found a family. I must try."

There was no gainsaying such arguments. Father Manuel did not try to dissuade him. For many months the boy had worked long and faithfully, with scarcely any wage other than his keep and a few castoff pieces of clothing. Now Father Manuel led him into their well-stocked storehouse and said:

"Take what you need, son."

Now there was only waiting for the right time of the moon. One afternoon Jean Baptiste rang the bell dangling above a high grilled gate and asked to see "Monsieur Jacque Clemorgan."

"Your name?" asked the porter, eyeing him curiously.

"Jean Baptiste de Sable."

From inside the court a voice called out:

"Jean Baptiste! Come in! Come in!"

Jacque Clemorgan had put on weight. He had been living by his wits since his arrival in New Orleans and had found several soft berths. Just now he was running a roulette wheel in an exclusive casino on Bourbon Street. This was the hour when no guests were about. The manager was reclining on a sofa in the shaded court when he heard the familiar voice. He led his guest into a small, cool room opening onto the balcony.

"You're looking extremely fit," he said. "Life with the good fathers agrees with you." He smiled, then called for a bottle of wine.

For a few minutes they talked of this and that. When Jean Baptiste told him his news Jacque sat quiet, slowly turning the stem of his glass between his fingers.

"When are you going?" he asked finally.

"Soon," answered the other. "September is almost here. Choctaw says that the river is lower now than at any other time of the year. This makes travel upstream easy. We should reach our destination before freezing time."

"Then what?"

"We're well supplied with everything we'll need for throwing up a shack, trapping and hunting during the winter months. In the spring we'll bring or send a first-class load of fine furs to New Orleans! It's the beginning, Jacque. And a good beginning."

Jacque Clemorgan got up and, standing in the door, looked down into the court. His eyes passed over the fancy, gilt-edged chairs and tables, the silk draperies hanging at doorways, the fountain that tossed over two plump cherubs.

"I'm going with you," he said without turning round. "That is, if I may join up with you two pirates."

They looked at each other and laughed. A great load had rolled away. Jean Baptiste now acknowledged to himself how he had hated this visit to say good-by.

"I never dreamed that you'd think of leaving all this," he said, waving his hand to include the silken hangings.

"I came to help you build your America, didn't I?" Then Jacque's voice grew harsh. "Do you think I *like* licking the hands of these Creoles?"

So it was arranged. To the rather spartan supplies already packed were added blankets, rugs, muskets and a case of wine. And on the morning they were leaving, Jacque appeared with two overcoats flung over his arm.

"We'll need them this winter," he explained.

They pushed out into the river above the thickly crowded docks. As they bent over their poles Jean Baptiste suddenly pointed triumphantly at his little sail. It bellowed out in the morning breeze and was taking them along. On each side thick forests came right down to the water, while cypress trees heavy with moss grew in the water. Some small white blooms formed a border all along the river's edge. Behind them they could see the high stockade and beyond the top of the Cabildo with the Spanish flag streaming out over the city.

New Orleans was just waking. Many Frenchmen had fled from the region but on this September morning those who remained were determined to ignore that "foreign" flag.

Looking back at it Jean Baptiste said:

"God be praised! I swear I'll never live under that flag."

Jacque shrugged his shoulders and Choctaw grunted.

PART TWO - INDIAN

"America, stretched like a buffalo hide,
aerial, clear night of gallop,
there, towards the starred summits
I drink your cup of green dew."

6

War Belts on the Mississippi

Cold winds blew over the water, stirring up choppy waves that broke angrily against the banks. Gray skies filled with scurrying clouds. Up the river approaching points of land assumed dark, mysterious shapes as they rose one above another. Slender canoes slipped by silently, going downstream, while overhead white gulls screamed. Frequently at night there was the splash and scraping of oars. Twice they heard drums beating in the night.

The three men in the boat bowed aching backs against the wind. They felt as if they had been rowing and poling and poling and rowing forever. They stayed close to the bank in order to avoid the current, but sometimes in spite of their efforts they could make no headway. The colors on the banks had changed from the dark, rich green of lush, thick foliage, interlaced with mosses trailing in the water, to cream-colored piles of rock which towered over them, then to the drab monotone of open prairies alternating with woods of dark straight trees. It seemed years since they left the sunshine, the bright gardens and sweet melons of Natchez. It was indeed forty-six days and they had traveled over four hundred miles. But as the sharp prairie wind blew across the river they regretted that pleasant week of loafing in Natchez. For freezing time was almost upon them and they were still far from their destination. Furthermore there was trouble up ahead.

They had just pulled in under a bluff to camp for the night when they heard voices from the river. Two shaggy trappers in a boat headed downstream stood up and waved.

"A good meeting!" called De Sable. "Come share our fire."

The two rowed in and beached their boat. They were clothed in skins, from their coonskin caps to deerskin leggings. Their boat was piled with pelts. When De Sable congratulated them upon the fine load the younger man merely looked at him with morose eyes.

"We're getting out before we lose them," said the older man as he squatted before the fire.

"Where do you come from?" asked Clemorgan.

The trapper shrugged his shoulders and pointed north. He glanced quickly toward his companion who had walked away in the dusk and stood looking across the river toward the opposite shore where shadows were gathering.

"My friend Pierre is sad," explained the trapper. "He lost his wife and child in the fighting at Tippycanoe."

Shock kept them silent. Then Clemorgan glanced toward their Indian guide who at the moment was gathering firewood.

"The Indians ain't to blame," said the trapper, guessing the blond man's thoughts. He hitched closer to the fire and continued in a low tone.

"We French do not walk into another man's house and snatch food off his table! We acted mannerly toward the Indians. They saw we meant them no harm." He watched Choctaw turn the stick holding a sizzling opossum over the fire. "The lake country's full of everything God sends. Beaver, otter, fox, raccoon, marten, buffalo, deer and bear in abundance. After a while the Indians did not mind if we helped ourselves. Our settlement at Detroit was a jolly good place where French and Indian raised their maize and squash. It got so in time of sickness an Indian would sooner send for Father Beauvais than for his own medicine man." The old trapper chuckled and his voice grew wistful. "We had boat races on the Maumee and dancing on the beach. That is, until the English came." He spat.

"When did they come?"

"Two years ago. Hard, calculating, cruel they were. Treated the Indians like dirt. Drove them out of the village! Cheated them in trades. Mystery is the Indians didn't rise up sooner." He sighed. "But now the British are driving us out."

"You mean the French and Indians together failed?" De Sable's voice was incredulous.

The trapper looked at him and shook his head. "It wasn't French and Indian together. That's what finally broke Pontiac's great spirit."

"Pontiac." De Sable repeated the name slowly. "Was that the Indian chief we heard about?"

"Aye. There's only one Pontiac!" The trapper sat silent, looking into the fire.

"I don't understand," De Sable said after a while, "this business of French soldiers not fighting."

"The commander at Fort de Chartres sent word to Pontiac at Detroit that the king of France and the king of the British had made peace. The English are now masters of all the French forts. They are to be turned over to them."

"No!" they cried out together.

"So says De Villiers. We Frenchmen have sent an emissary to the governor of Louisiana. We appealed to him to raise a force and save us."

Clemorgan's hollow laugh made the trapper stare in his direction.

"He won't, my friend. Governor Aubrey is occupied with preparing entertainment for the Spaniards in New Orleans."

"Spaniards in New Orleans! No! No!" The trapper sprang to his feet. He looked around for his friend, then hurried to the edge of the water where the young man was standing.

The two at the fire looked after him, watching, while with many gestures he told what he had heard. One question came back to them:

"How can the king do this to us?" They could not hear the young man's reply.

"We might well ask that question," murmured De Sable.

"The answer is simple," said Clemorgan harshly. "He is the *king!* What is it to him that this man's wife and child die in America?"

"You do wrong to talk so, Jacque." De Sable's voice was severe. "The king does not know these things."

"Tell him!" was Clemorgan's retort.

After a time they ate the opossum. They were hungry and the meat was delicious. But no lighthearted songs were sung that evening. Sleep was troubled and the next morning when the *voyageurs* bade one another *adieu* it was with a sense of fatality. None but the good Lord knew what the morrow would bring.

There was never any lack of food. But as the days grew shorter and their heavy pirogue seemed to move slower they begrudged time for hunting and fishing. Whenever possible they traded for fresh meat with hunters whom they met. On the morning they saw several canoes coming toward them Clemorgan said:

"Let's hail them! They may have venison."

There were five of the white birch canoes. They came through the water as graceful as a flock of birds flying in formation, propelled by slender dark figures who lifted paddles in long, even strokes. The paddlers seemed to be naked—with the clean, smooth faces of boys. Each wore a single feather stuck in the knot of hair on his head and as they came closer the watchers caught the glint of bracelets and beads.

"Big warrior!" exclaimed Choctaw pointing to the center and largest boat.

This canoe also had its two paddlers, one at each end, but the figure at which they stared sat motionless. Horns seemed to spring from each side of the big head. The dark face was streaked with bright colors and on the bare chest was something that glittered.

"Forget the venison," growled Clemorgan, giving his oar a hard pull that sent the pirogue nearer the east bank. "We'll be lucky if they don't scalp us."

The flotilla was almost midstream in the current. The Indians gave no indication of having seen the craft so laboriously making its way upstream. They were almost abreast when a man sitting at the back of the large canoe stood up and looked hard in their direction. Beard, bared head and loose shirt showed that he was a white man, though sun and wind had bronzed his skin. At the sight of him De Sable advanced to the front of his boat and shouted:

"Hail, friend!"

The man leaned forward as if addressing the motionless horned figure which continued to stare straight ahead. After a moment he again looked toward the pirogue and shouted in French:

"Who are you?"

"Traders from New Orleans. We go to St. Louis."

"They're French!" Clemorgan relaxed on his oar. "Ask for the venison!"

A minute or so passed while the Frenchman again talked with the Indian warrior. Then the Frenchman shouted:

"A moment, my friends! We would consult with you. Pull into shore!"

While they looked at each other uncertainly they heard a sharp, peremptory flow of sounds and—exactly like a flock of birds—the canoes wheeled around and headed for the bank near them. They were encircled.

"Is this good?" De Sable asked Choctaw.

"You get venison—maybe," answered Choctaw with a rare grin.

The Indians sprang up the bank first. The paddlers flung themselves onto the short grass as if welcoming a chance to stretch. The Frenchman and warrior stood watching while the three poled their heavy craft into shallow water, then waded to shore. De Sable now saw that the warrior held a smoking pipe in his hand while the Frenchman carried a large bag made of whitish skin.

"I am Alexis Cuillerier," said the Frenchman when they came up. "This is an Ottawa brave called Minavavana."

"I am Jean Baptiste," said the dark man.

"And I, Jacque Clemorgan."

"I am called Choctaw."

"Choctaw!" exclaimed Cuillerier. "You are a Choctaw?"

"That is the name of my tribe," answered the Indian.

"Then I have news for you," said the Frenchman cordially. "Let us be seated."

They squatted in a circle on the ground. The warrior took a few puffs on his pipe, then handed it to De Sable who sat next to him. De Sable took it but held it in his hand, uncertain what to do.

"Smoke a little," said Choctaw quickly, "then hand it on."

"You have never smoked a peace pipe?" Cuillerier asked and there was suspicion in his eyes as he looked hard at De Sable.

"Forgive my ignorance," said De Sable politely. "My friend and I are but recently come to Louisiana. We do not know the customs here."

"Where are you from?" asked the Frenchman watching him closely.

"We're from Santo Domingo."

"Oh, I see." Satisfied, Cuillerier turned back to Choctaw. "I must tell you that we travel south with wampum sent by Pontiac to the Choctaw, Tunica, Ofogoula and Avoyelle urging those tribes to help us drive out the British. Behold Pontiac's war belt!"

He reached into the bag and brought his hand out holding a tightly coiled red and black roll. Choctaw leaned forward and touched the roll with his finger. The coils loosened as if stirred to life. They seemed to ripple. With a faint slithering sound, the broad yard-long band of wampum crawled across the grass. It lay there, uncurled and glistening. It was made of beads and tiny shells worked in designs.

Cuillerier took it up. "See—here is the otter, Pontiac's own sign. Here are the signs of other tribes pledged to him." He pointed out each one. "The Miami, the Illinois, Chippewa, Potawatomie, Huron, Shawnee!" Cuillerier's eyes were shining. "Who says Pontiac is beaten? Never—while this belt carries its message throughout all New France!"

"But what of French soldiers to help?" De Sable asked anxiously.

"Oh! Our king has already sent word to the British to leave Detroit. He comes soon with a great army to retake it!"

"Good! Good!" De Sable exalted. "You see, Jacque, I told you our king would not desert his loyal subjects." He turned eagerly to Cuillerier. "I understand that this Indian chief Pontiac *is* a loyal French subject."

Cuillerier did not speak for a moment. He fingered his beard thoughtfully.

"I find it hard to explain Pontiac to you who do not know Indians. Pontiac is himself a great king—with something like an empire many times larger than France. Yet he does not rule like a king. He advises, teaches and leads. He listens, always eager to learn. We take his guidance because we love and revere him."

"I thought he was a terrible warrior," exclaimed Clemorgan.

"He is a great commander. He is defending his people against terrible wrongs."

The pipe of peace made the circle. Each one had puffed it. Now as Cuillerier handed it back to the warrior he smiled.

"You think it strange that the Indian smokes a pipe of peace while preparing for war. Pontiac wants peace for his people above all things. But it must be peace in life. We Frenchmen understand that."

An hour later the three stood in their pirogue watching the white birch canoes skimming over the water like birds in formation going south. And when they camped for the night they ate venison.

Now after many more days backs ached with the rowing and poling, hands were blistered and faces cut by the wind. On each side the prairies stretched away. They stayed close to the right bank, the country of Illinois. For Choctaw had pointed westward and uttered the frightening word:

"Sioux!"

The long day was ending. The sun broke through the clouds, its long golden rays transforming the landscape. For a little while the western sky glowed with all the colors of the rainbow. Even as the colors faded they seemed to drain away into the earth.

They had hoped to reach Kaskaskia by nightfall. This was the largest settlement in the Illinois area. Here they could rest, replenish their supplies and get further news. They had been warned that the British were making forays into this section and had corrupted some of the Indians. But Kaskaskia was wholly French.

Only a few fleecy clouds lingered in the dusky sky. Then a full moon illumined the river so they continued rowing in the expectation that around each bend they would see the twinkling lights of the town. At last De Sable groaned:

"It's no use. Let's make camp."

They pulled up onto the shore and wearily climbed out of the boat. Hardly were they on land when Choctaw stooped, ran for a few feet into the prairie and returned.

"Footpath," he said, pointing downward, "leads that way." He indicated the direction he had run.

"We're near Kaskaskia all right," Jacque commented carelessly, "but let's forget about it until morning."

The Indian's face was troubled as he undid the packs. They ate cold duck cooked the evening before, then rolled up in their blankets and went to sleep.

Something hard and terrifying clawed De Sable awake! He struggled and tried to cry out but his breath was cut off. His first thought was that he was set upon by some wild beast. Then he was jerked to his feet, his hands held behind him. He heard heavy breathing, grunts and the sound of scuffling. Was that tumbling mass of arms and legs on the ground Jacque? The moonlight was gone but he could now distinguish dark figures swarming around them. A cry from Choctaw—a tumble of words in his Indian tongue—sudden silence as if the words had been choked off! De Sable lunged forward and was knocked to the ground. He could not reach for his gun which was lying somewhere close by. Indians! he thought despairingly. We've been captured by unfriendly Indians. He lay quiet on the ground, marshaling his senses, pulling together his energy while he strained his ears. Rough hands once more jerked him to his feet. Everything blacked out when something scratchy and evil smelling was pulled over his head. Then something hard in his back, perhaps the butt of a gun, pushed him and he began stumbling over what seemed to be fairly smooth ground. The footpath! he thought, remembering Choctaw's finding it when they landed. Breathing was possible but difficult. He wondered if Jacque and Choctaw were on the path. He could hear nothing. There was only the hard probing in his back when he hesitated.

Impossible to judge how far or how long he walked. He was ready to sink down with exhaustion when he knew he was no longer walking over the prairie. No tall grasses whipped against his legs; the surface under his feet was smooth and hard. Then he heard a murmur of voices—a dog barked. His keen ears detected the difference between the indistinguishable sounds of a village—even at night—and those of the open wilderness. A few more steps and he said to himself, "I am inside a house." He stood still and there was no push against his back. After a moment, whatever it was over his head was pulled off.

His heart leaped with relief when he saw that the three were standing together—Jacque, Choctaw and himself. Their hands were bound behind them but except for a few scratches and skin bruises they did not seem to be injured. After the exchange of one swift reassuring glance at each other they coolly looked around. Only confidence and daring would serve them now.

They were in a blockhouse bigger than any cabin De Sable had seen. The logs had been stripped of bark; they were small and uniform in size and stood on end, neatly side by side. The tops curved together and were intertwined with crosspieces of large poles which acted as braces. Sheets of bark were laid over this frame except at the ridge where an open strip was left for smoke to escape. At the moment a thread of smoke curled upward from a hearth of smutted stones directly under the opening. Along the sides of the long room were double platforms with posts made of saplings. Over these platforms hung magnificent furs—great bearskins, beavers, otters and martens. De Sable quickly estimated that he saw a fortune spread out before them. Braids of corn hung from the roof poles. In one corner was a mortar and pestle, the mortar made from a hollowed tree trunk. The place was clean and orderly and was lighted by flickering pine torches stuck at regular intervals along the walls.

Half a dozen Indians were standing watch over them while several others moved about apparently making preparations for some event. Additional torches were brought in and placed at the far end of the room where De Sable now saw a platform more luxuriously heaped with furs then any along the side. After a short interval the three prisoners were pushed toward this platform. Then a door opened at this end of the room to admit two Indians who resembled the Ottawa brave they had met with the Frenchman. Their faces and bodies were streaked with paint and from each side of their heads sprang horns. They walked one to each side of the platform, then turned and faced the room.

De Sable held his breath. Even before the third figure in the doorway could be clearly seen he was certain who it would be. Every Indian stood motionless, his eyes riveted on that tall, commanding form which moved with such majesty and dignity as the third man mounted the platform and turned toward them.

Instinctively De Sable bowed. He knew that he was in the presence of the chieftain Pontiac.

7

Legacy from Pontiac

Pontiac was darker than most Indians. His hairless face and body were unpainted but they gleamed in the torchlight. His body was well knit and muscular. His face was too sharply hewn to be called handsome. The beak of his nose was high and imperious, his cheekbones prominent and his piercing black eyes deep set beneath a broad, sweeping forehead. His hair was arranged in a narrow, short pompadour, diminishing from front to back. His short tunic was of white doeskin, beaded in intricate and colorful designs as were his leggings and moccasins. Around his neck he wore a chain of gold nuggets. Silver bracelets shone on his arms and something sparkled at the lobes of his ears. Nature had given this dark son of hers a kingly air.

Rumors were spreading that the British planned to assassinate Pontiac. Illinois Indians were on the alert to see that no harm came to the great leader while he was among them. On this night the chieftain was told that British spies had been caught on the outskirts of the village which at the moment he was using as headquarters. Pontiac immediately arose from his couch to question the prisoners. There must be no mistake. For if they were from the British the prisoners would surely die!

For a while the chieftain studied the three lined up before him. Then he made a peremptory gesture and one of the Indians beside them stepped forward and in a moderate tone began his recital. Unquestionably he was telling how they were found and brought to the village. De Sable glanced toward Choctaw and saw from the expression on the Indian's set face that these two Indians of tribes far removed from each other had no common language. They had not understood Choctaw's cries. In this crisis their Indian guide and interpreter was helpless. How could they make themselves understood? De Sable turned back to the princely figure on the platform. *Pontiac surely understands French!* All that he had heard of Pontiac flashed through his mind. If this was indeed Pontiac—and he was sure it was—a bold attempt might be successful. De Sable decided to try. The moment the recital was finished De Sable stepped forward quickly and in a loud, ringing voice said:

"Your Majesty! I beg leave to speak to you! We are loyal Frenchmen and claim your protection!"

In a flash he saw two things happen: The Indian who leaped toward him with club raised and the pistol-sharp clap of the hands which stopped him. The Indian moved back and De Sable waited for permission to proceed.

The chieftain's face did not change by so much as a flicker of an eyelash. He understood French though he seldom attempted to speak it. His black eyes scrutinized the face of this prisoner who dared address him. Clothes and voice said he was a white man but the color of his skin was dark—darker even than his own. He was not an Indian. No Indian would allow such disfiguring hairs to grow on his face! Who was he? What was he? Pontiac clapped his hands and a boy came from where he had been standing near the door. The boy's head scarcely reached to the chieftain's shoulder as he stood listening carefully to something Pontiac was saying. Then he turned toward De Sable.

"My father says," he repeated in slow, faulty French, "thou dost not have the eyes of a liar. Come closer. He will hear thee."

At a sign from the boy De Sable felt his bound arms being released. Gratefully he clasped his hands in front of him, approached nearer the platform and bowed.

"All the world knows of the great French Indian chief who fights our common enemy, the British. We come to New France to join such Frenchmen. We are friends."

"How are you called?" the boy interpreted.

"Jean Baptiste de Sable."

At that Pontiac's stern face did change. He leaned forward and spoke quickly.

"My father asks if you are from Pointe de Sable?"

De Sable's face expressed his surprise. "That was my father's name!" he exclaimed.

The chieftain made an uncertain gesture. After a quick exchange between father and son the boy said:

"We do not understand. Please to explain!"

"*My* father's name was Pointe de Sable. Is that clear?"

"Was *he* from Pointe de Sable?" *

At the expression on De Sable's face the chieftain's features melted into a smile. He leaned toward the boy.

"My father says that Pointe de Sable is a sandy point of land where the Detroit River flows into Lake Erie. Did your father come from there?"

De Sable shook his head in bewilderment. "My father came from France," he murmured.

"Yet his name was Pointe de Sable?" asked the boy.

At De Sable's emphatic affirmative Pontiac's face wreathed in smiles. All in the room saw this with surprise. The chieftain suddenly appeared many years younger. He spoke rapidly to the boy, gesturing as he did so. The boy repeated:

"My father's joy is great at this good omen sent by the Great Spirit, his grandfather. My father first saw the light of day at Pointe de Sable. This name borne by your father, this time of your coming to us, is a bond which augurs good between you. He bids you welcome!"

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* Note: The literal English translation of Pointe de Sable is Sandy Point just as the translation of Du Bois is Woods.

Pontiac had come forward. At the conclusion of his son's slow speech he slipped one of the shining silver bands from his left arm and held it out to De Sable saying:

"Take!"

De Sable was so amazed at the surprising turn of events that for a moment he only gaped upward. Then he slowly accepted the bracelet and bowed saying:

"Thank you! Thank you!"

Several sharp commands rang out over his head. Everybody was staring at him. But before the chieftain stalked from the room his son left a final message:

"My father begs that you accept our hospitality. Please talk with him in the morning."

"My friends also?" asked De Sable. "Are we free?"

"Certainly," answered the boy. "My father does not hold Frenchmen captives."

They walked out then with Indians who treated them with the utmost respect and were shown to a smaller house, where immediately food and blankets were brought. Choctaw told them the raised platforms were also beds. Though the darkness outside was lifting they lay down and went to sleep.

Outside the Illinois kept watch. The great Pontiac had said to treat these strangers with honor. They would obey. But they would also watch them.

So in his twenty-second year Jean Baptiste de Sable met Pontiac and learned to esteem him. His first winter in the Mississippi Valley was spent with the Illinois and many long evenings he sat with Indian braves at the feet of Pontiac and listened to his wise words.

Pontiac was about fifty-five years old at this time. For an Indian this was the prime of life. At this age undiminished physical strength combines with the wisdom of years, though wisdom was not limited to the years of one life. An Indian chief inherited the knowledge of a thousand years—all that his forefathers had learned. Pontiac's wisdom differed from the white man's knowledge. His forefathers wrapped their knowledge in reverence—reverence for the earth and all living things, reverence for the Great Spirit who furnished a dwelling place for his children filled with everything for their needs.

Now Pontiac was pitting his strength against the most powerful military might of the century—an inexorable force which was not only destroying the reservoir of abundance but threatened the very spark of life itself. De Sable heard the grief in his voice as he chided his young men.

"You no longer revere the Maker of heaven and earth, the trees, lakes, rivers and all things else. He loves you but you must do His will. The land where you dwell He has made for you and not for others. What have the whites brought you that you did not have save guns and fire water? Did you not live by the bow and arrow? You have no need of gun or powder. You caught animals to live upon and to dress yourselves with their skins. The Great Spirit does not forbid us to welcome friends among us. He loves those who come from the Good Father." For a moment the flashing eyes turned toward their dark visitor and his pale companion. "They know the Great Spirit. But as for those who come to trouble our lands," the voice hardened, "drive them out! Send them back to the lands which He created for them and let them stay there. Fling away their kettles and guns! Pour their rum onto the sands lest it turn you into fools! Live as your wise forefathers lived before you!"

But that winter there was no time for sadness. Tuscarawa, the village chief, quickly welcomed the men whom the great Pontiac chose to honor. A house was set aside for them, their boats with all their supplies brought from the river. They had arrived at the beginning of the hunting season when there was much going and coming. Whole families went out together to hunt, fish and trap. Those who did not go far returned after ten days or a week. The men cleaned, stretched and salted pelts. Women cut up strips of venison to dry for preservation, fried out bear fat for oil and scraped deerskins for making clothing. Choctaw was at home amid these activities. He excelled as a trapper. In a few days he had managed to overcome language difficulties and went off jubilantly with a family which was going far to the north. Clemorgan was only a fair marksman but on the second day out with a group he brought down a bear with credit to himself.

De Sable's skills as a woodsman left much to be desired. He knew pelts but he had done little hunting. He could fish but now that seemed left to young boys.

"I can best work with the women," he said ruefully to Otussa.

Pontiac's son Otussa was little older than De Sable had been when he was taken to France, but the young Indian had learned tribal responsibility as he learned to walk. He gladly set about teaching the visitor their ways.

One morning the boy appeared leading a shaggy pony.

"You must learn to ride these ponies," he announced.

De Sable had seen the Indians riding these stout little horses but he regarded this animal dubiously and shook his head.

"Soon we go buffalo hunt," the boy told him. "You come."

This was incentive enough. The pony threw De Sable once but after that he began controlling it. Otussa hid his laughter.

For days everybody talked about the buffalo hunt. Families hurried back for this most important hunt of the season. Everybody had some share in it. At the appointed time a caravan rode out of the village—men, women, boys and girls riding horses or ponies and pack horses carrying tents and supplies. Only the very old and the small children were left behind. Tuscarawa himself led the procession.

The caravan traveled across broad undulating land covered with brush and low shrubs. Frost had killed the long green grasses which lay brown and still on the ground. Jack rabbits, long-tailed weasels and prairie chickens ran for cover as the Indians passed. But the little creatures were in no danger. Not even the smallest hunter would draw a single arrow from his quiver for such game.

It was a bright, cold day with little wind. The three *voyageurs* rode together for the first time in weeks. Choctaw was full of what he had seen in the lake region.

"Animals all over, clean and fat from the juicy grasses growing tall out of rich, black soil. Many streams full of fish."

"You saw the lake called Michigan?" asked De Sable.

"Like the sea it is. There is no other side." Choctaw's attention was drawn to the pony De Sable rode. He looked at it a moment and commented, "I think that animal is old and slow. Buffaloes run over you."

Clemorgan laughed. "He's safe. They plan to keep us out of the way."

"Nonsense!" De Sable was indignant. "I'm here to shoot buffaloes." He called: "Allo! Otussa!"

The boy looked back and waved his hand. He wheeled his pony about and rode up beside them.

"What is this about us not getting a chance at the buffaloes? Even I will be able to hit so large an object."

Otussa saw the grin on Clemorgan's face. He did not want to hurt his eager dark friend and so answered solemnly:

"The great buffalo can be shot only with arrows. Muskets are useless against them and gunpowder spoils the skin." De Sable's face expressed his disappointment but he nodded his head and the boy continued: "Much skill is required. Hunter aims always for the heart. One wounded buffalo can stampede the whole herd."

"The big beasts quick and powerful," added Choctaw. "In a flash they get horns under your horse and toss him high in the air."

Otussa pointed out a string of sleek, slender horses trotting along riderless behind the ponies. "Fast horses for hunters," he said. "No extra weight ever put on them. They always fresh and ready for long run soon as buffalo sighted."

"Does your father shoot buffaloes?" asked De Sable.

"A-a-ah!" breathed the boy, but the gesture which accompanied his exclamation indicated that Pontiac was the mightiest of buffalo hunters.

The men smiled. Otussa did not appear worried because his father was off somewhere visiting other tribes, probably in danger. Pontiac had not said when he would return but his house was kept ready.

For a while they rode along in silence. De Sable's blood tingled. For the first time he was experiencing the joy of horseback riding.

At sundown they dismounted and set up their small tents, called tepees. The men gathered together about a big fire while the women prepared the evening meal. After all had eaten, two of the older men stood up and looked over the entire assemblage as if searching for someone. Finally they pointed out a lad only slightly larger than Otussa. He jumped up eagerly. One of the men addressed a few words to him and he ran quickly to his tepee.

"He has been chosen scout," whispered Choctaw. "This is a great honor. Listen!"

The Indians were singing—softly at first but when the lad reappeared and walked slowly toward the fire the song rose. De Sable leaned forward as the music enveloped him. He had heard no such singing since he left his island home. Only this song was not sad and mournful as were the songs of the slaves. This music seemed to blend all the prairie with the sweep of the sky. It was the earth straining upward to the sky—it was the sound of rivers ever flowing toward the sea. It was wild and free as the wind that blew across the prairies.

Firelight played over the boy. He wore nothing but a breechcloth and moccasins. Around his neck was a twisted buckskin string to which was tied a small bag—on his back a quiverful of arrows, and he carried a large, strong bow. Three times he ran around the fire and the fourth time he sped off into the darkness. The song followed him, then it died away. The fire was extinguished and the assemblage went to their separate tents. An old man came around to every tepee, warning the inmates to be very quiet.

De Sable lay on his back for a long time. Through the flap of his tent he could see the black sky studded with stars. The silence seemed pulsing with life. Somewhere up there in the heavens the song hovered over him.

They were waked while it was still dark. The same old man passed from tepee to tepee. Fires were made, food prepared and before sunrise the camp was moving. The land over which they traveled now was more hilly than the day before. Just before the sun appeared Chief Tuscarawa ordered a halt and, surrounded by twelve older men, he went up a hill where they built a fire which could be seen for a long distance.

"We wait now for the scout," Choctaw said.

The wait was not long. One of the men near the fire arose and pointed. The scout was coming over a distant ridge. He stopped and extended his arms, then turned and ran a short distance eastward along the top of the ridge, stopped, turned and ran westward. A shout went up from the watching Indians.

"That means he has sighted many buffaloes," explained Choctaw.

Everyone now drew closer to the fire where they watched the scout's arrival. The lad was covered with sweat. He was panting but he did not pause for rest. He bowed to Chief Tuscarawa, then with his arms outstretched he began to chant. When the chant was ended the Indians shouted once more. All the omens were good.

At that moment, as if coming out of the sunrise, three horsemen appeared at the top of a hill to the east. For a moment the dark figures were silhouetted against the glowing sky, then in a cloud of dust they pounded straight toward the group. For just a moment there was an instinctive drawing together. Were they friends or enemies? Then De Sable heard a shout:

"Pontiac!"

He came on—riding a glistening steed as proud and thoroughbred as himself. He wore a magnificent headdress of long feathers which swept out behind him, and something bright red about his thighs. De Sable watched him thunder to a stop and greet Chief Tuscarawa. Behind him the two Ottawa warriors dismounted.

For a little while there was a hubbub of voices. Then Otussa, his eyes shining, came to tell De Sable.

"My father heard we had come this way for the hunt. He saw our fires and has asked permission to join us."

In spite of Tuscarawa's invitation that he ride beside him, Pontiac fell back with the other hunters. It was the chief's place to lead his village to this hunt.

The men were ready and impatient. They now rode the hunting horses without saddles and held the reins on their bridle arm, the heavy bows at their side. Since the buffaloes were not far distant, caution must be taken that they did not stampede in the direction of the camp where the women and old men remained in charge of ponies and pack horses. At last the signal came to move off.

De Sable and Clemorgan rode a short distance behind and slightly to one side of the hunters. They carried their guns but understood they were to shoot only in case of attack. Otussa with several other boys rode just ahead of them. Although the youths were not considered skillful enough to ride into the heat of the hunt, they were permitted to go along.

As soon as the hunters appeared at the top of the ridge the buffaloes saw them. Some of the beasts were lying down. They began to rise and huddle together, viewing the approaching horsemen with symptoms of alarm. This was the moment which required the strictest discipline. The hunters now had their bows in place, but if one arrow was shot too soon a winter's supply of meat would be lost.

De Sable watched the lean, muscular red men draw back the heavy string of their bows. Then all together with a humming whang the shower of arrows shot into the herd. The concerted bellow produced an earthquake! A roar and rattle of hoofs, a blinding cloud of dust and suddenly De Sable realized that his horse had bolted! He pulled on the reins with all his might. All around him giant bodies heaved and stamped. Perhaps he owed his life to the fact that his little horse knew better than he how to avoid those deadly hoofs and goring horns. The pressure of ponderous bodies about him lessened. All at once the curtain of dust was swept aside and he saw a buffalo, whose size terrified him, charging straight toward Chief Tuscarawa's horse. A broken arrow hung from its side. De Sable saw the chief shoot but his arrow missed. Like one paralyzed, De Sable waited to see the maddened beast sink his horns into Tuscarawa's horse when a long, quivering arrow sank deep into the joint of the buffalo's hip and with a blast of pain the animal fell back upon its haunches. Another arrow sank right behind the small ribs and the buffalo dropped over on its side, blood running from its nose.

The whole attack lasted only a few minutes. The hunters did not pursue that part of the herd which escaped and went thundering down through the valley. They were satisfied with the score or more buffaloes which lay on the ground. They killed only what they thought was enough for the village. No one was injured though all knew that only Pontiac's matchless shooting had saved their chief from a frightful death.

That evening as they rested near the fire Otussa came to sit beside De Sable. The young Indian's face was troubled.

"I was close enough to see your father save Tuscarawa's life," boasted De Sable. "A moment more and the buffalo would have gored him!"

"This is not a good thing," said the boy. "My father took Tuscarawa's bull. The chief shot and missed. Then my father killed it."

"But your father saved the chief's life!" exclaimed De Sable in amazement.

The boy shook his head. "My father's shooting shamed the chief before his people. This is not good."

De Sable stared at the Indian boy but could find nothing to say.

8

A Chief Dies and De Sable Leaves St. Louis

Twice the seasons went around. Planting time followed hunting time and went on into berrying and wild rice time, then it was harvest time. Twice the sun climbed up and grew strong and still no army had been sent by the French king to Illinois to drive out the British. French authority in the region stemmed from St. Ange de Bellerive, commander of Fort de Chartres, largest and most modern fort on the Mississippi River. After the Spaniards took over New Orleans, St. Ange's expectations of help from that quarter collapsed. He notified the Indian chiefs in the area that their French king had made peace with the British king and that they must lay down their arms. At the same time he closed his eyes to the fact that the Indians not only drew clothing from the fort supplies that winter but also ammunition. And he lingered on at Fort de Chartres as long as the rumors about new battalions persisted. Kaskaskia was almost deserted, the settlers having moved to the west bank of the Mississippi and established a community which they called Sainte Genevieve.

Jean Baptiste de Sable and Jacque Clemorgan did not accompany these Frenchmen. The two friends were regularly sending furs down the Mississippi. They had a large barge, a score of Indian assistants and were receiving furs from trappers distributed throughout the district.

It was now Clemorgan who tended "store," a rude shack and landing platform on the river, and De Sable who roamed in the woods. Jean Baptiste, as he was generally known, was no longer a greenhorn hunter. He had learned to track down animals by the bend of the grass and by the broken twigs; he had learned the art of concealing himself and he moved swiftly and silently. But it was his skill with bow and arrow which was most remarked by the Indians. In buckskin shirt and breeches, with moccasins on his feet and his legs wrapped in deerskin, he might have been taken for an Indian had it not been for his rather bushy hair and the light beard. Nor did he any longer need an interpreter. And always he wore on his arm the silver bracelet.

"Shouldn't be surprised any day if you bring in a British scalp!" Clemorgan squinted at his dark friend who, squatted Indianlike on the floor, was examining a bundle of beaver pelts.

"That big-bellied cow they say is taking over the fort has no scalp," Jean Baptiste said gloomily. He fingered the skins a moment, then snapped, "Jacque, we'll have to leave!"

"Why should we?" The other man looked about at the piles of fur.

"Because we're finished here!" Jean Baptiste ran his hand through his thick hair. "Everywhere I've gone these last days the Indians told me British agents had been there. They must take their furs to the fort. Henceforth the good English king will supply all their needs. Well, I went to Fort de Chartres. I found out what the British call barter: *one blanket for three beavers, a shirt for six raccoons, a pound of gunpowder for four martens!* And all about were piles of useless junk—calicoes, ribbons, yarn hoses, red leather trunks, snuffboxes and mirrors. It's shameful!" He got up and walked to the door of the shack.

It was early September. The river flowed by sedately under a blue sky. The air was light and sweet, washed clean of the sultry August heat, with no touch of chill. A canoe skimmed by.

Jean Baptiste returned the wave of its occupants and sighed. Behind him at the table Clemorgan shoved aside his papers.

"What in heaven's name is Pontiac doing?"

"What can he do?" The man at the door did not turn his head. Councils, meetings, conferences—at Ottawa, Detroit, all up and down the Mississippi—Pontiac was trying to get the best terms possible for his people, trying to work out some agreement whereby white men and red might live together on this land. What more could he do? Jean Baptiste spoke from the door. "They will stop our river trade. A trapper from up near Cahokia told me the British took away his barge."

Clemorgan came and joined him at the door. The two friends stood together looking out across the river.

"If we must leave," Clemorgan finally said, "it should be before things freeze." He looked up and smiled quizzically. "You know the fur company at St. Louis won't welcome us." Clemorgan offered this almost eagerly. He had thought of the pretty little Indian maiden in the village whom he did not want to leave.

Jean Baptiste shrugged his shoulders. "We have our own boats. And we will keep sending furs down to Choctaw."

The delta Indian had returned to New Orleans with their first bargeload of furs. Choctaw remained and it was he who received and disposed of their shipments. So far the arrangement had worked well. The Spaniards encouraged trade from up the river.

The villagers were sorry to see these two go. Misfortune was closing in about the Indians. This was one more unhappy parting. Jean Baptiste hastened to assure his friends they were not going far. "I'll be coming back often," he said. But they knew this meant that the two good-natured young men—one so dark and one so light—would no longer be hunting, fishing and boating with them—would no longer dance for the planting and for the harvest, would no longer sit with them for the feasting.

And what of the good omen Pontiac had said the dark one's coming foretold? Where was Pontiac? Old men shook their heads.

That fall St. Ange de Bellerive formally surrendered Fort de Chartres and the territory east of the Mississippi to British officers. He moved his entire garrison to St. Louis and took over civil and military affairs there. St. Louis thus became the capital of Upper Louisiana.

The *voyageurs* decided to land at Ste Genevieve. They found about seventy families living along the side of the river forming a settlement of well-built houses surrounded by shade trees and gardens, with the river itself its only street. But behind these houses extended broad fields of grain and pastures and fine wooded lands. There was saltmaking on nearby Saline Creek and lead mining about thirty miles to the southwest. Ste Genevieve shipped grain, meats, honey, salt and lead to New Orleans and St. Louis. As a rule Indian trappers took furs to St. Louis. But every condition existed here for a profitable fur trade—a trade which might well extend into Canada. The two experienced fur traders who came equipped with canoes, barges and several pelts of the highest quality were therefore welcomed. It was not long before recent arrivals from Kaskaskia were saying that they knew them. One of these settlers gave the young men permission to build a landing at the foot of his grounds. They put up a small storehouse. In a few months they were busier than they had ever been in Illinois.

Meanwhile the exclusive fur-trading privileges granted Maxent, Laclade and Company of New Orleans were withdrawn by the Spaniards. But Ste Genevieve and St. Louis were French in every sense of the word. The fact that he was living on Spanish soil came as a shock to Jean Baptiste de Sable—a jarring surprise which he did not receive until the spring of 1769. And this surprise, followed as it was by angry heartbreak, changed the course of his life.

De Sable had been away for several weeks on an expedition up the turbulent Missouri River. He had seen the prehistoric remains of ancient Indians, had shot quail and pheasant and brought back the finest load of furs they had ever collected.

For an hour the partners sat on their porch looking out across the Mississippi and talking of the new possibilities opened up by this trip. Work for the day was almost finished but a crew was still loading the boat which would leave for New Orleans in the morning. It was a keelboat capable of carrying twenty to twenty-five tons of goods. The cargo box, where freight was stored, rose four feet above the deck and extended to within ten feet from each end of the boat. A far cry from the pirogue they had so painfully and slowly brought up the river four years before!

Jacque Clemorgan looked down at the boat and stretched his arms. Soon they would be rich in very truth! His eyes were dancing with suppressed excitement. Jean Baptiste had not noticed because he had been so full of his own talk. But now he sat quiet for a moment. Clemorgan spoke lazily:

"Looks like now we can take on trade with Canada."

"Yes, we can," responded Jean Baptiste. "We'll need more help. And I think, Jacque, it's time for us to take hold of some of this land. That means we're established here. We'll develop it as we go along."

Clemorgan fairly purred. "We have land—a fine stretch of fertile land right on the river between here and St. Louis."

"What?" Jean Baptiste turned toward him and saw his glowing face. "Why, Jacque! You must have pushed through a powerful trade How did you get it?"

"It's a grant—a grant made to two recently appointed St. Louis commissioners!"

Clemorgan watched while the full meaning of his words sank in. Jean Baptiste stared at him a moment.

"By my soul, man! What are you saying?" He started up.

"Sit down! Sit down, my friend!" Clemorgan spoke quickly. He waited until Jean Baptiste had resumed his seat. "I have news for you—news you would have heard had you stopped in St. Louis. I'm glad you didn't." He paused.

"What is it? Tell me!" Anxiety was gathering in the dark eyes.

"Two weeks ago we had a visitor—a man who poked about in the storehouse and asked many questions. He was from New Orleans and he knew we were shipping goods down there. He complimented us on what we had done and said he needed us in this region."

"Who was he? Who was this man from New Orleans?" asked Jean Baptiste impatiently.

"An official from the Spanish government. All the land west of the Mississippi River now belongs to Spain."

"You lie!" Jean Baptiste was on his feet, his eyes blazing.

"Oh, sit down!" Clemorgan spoke dryly. "You have only to step outside the yard to confirm that fact. Nobody around here talks of anything else. What difference does it make?"

"You ask that? A Frenchman?"

"Oh! Frenchman! Englishman! Spaniards! What are you talking about? I live in America. I am an American!"

"American!" The dark man repeated the syllables scornfully. "There is no such word."

"There ought to be," snapped Clemorgan. "We came here to get land. All right, we have land—good land. We came here to build up trade. We have trade! Soon we'll be rich. What do I care what king writes his name on a scroll of paper? What do I care whose flag they fly? *This land is mine!* That's all I care about."

"I am a Frenchman as my father was a Frenchman." These words came haughtily.

Clemorgan looked up a moment and then said one word: "Bosh!"

For a moment De Sable looked as if he might strike him. Then he turned away. He walked a little distance and stood leaning against the porch railing. Behind him Clemorgan spoke persuasively:

"Listen, Jean Baptiste. Let us not quarrel. I know your father was born in France, but I think he was of mixed blood—as I am."

"You?" Jean Baptiste turned and looked into the blue eyes.

"What does it mean that my father was a Frenchman? My grandmother was black. She was born in Africa." The blue eyes softened and a tender smile played around his lips. "She was like a little bird, bright-colored kerchief on her head like plumage, sparkling black eyes—big, shining earrings that I loved to touch. And the sweetest voice I ever heard." He walked to the door and laid a hand on the stooping shoulder. "Why should we lose America because a French king loses a war? What are these kings to us?"

The dark man reached for his friend's hand. For a time neither spoke, then De Sable shook his head.

"I saw the Spaniards kill my mother. I will take nothing from them. I will not live under their flag."

He stumbled down the path toward the river. The loading men had gone for their evening meal. His eyes passed over the boat, noting all its good points. Near by on the bank lay his canoe with the paddle beside it. He picked it up and waded out into the water. In a moment he was skimming over the surface.

He gave no thought to where he was going. His mind was a jumble. He wanted only to get away. All the joy of the day was gone—the satisfaction of accomplishment, the feeling of success, the planning. His senses were blunted and dull. Before he realized it he had crossed the river. He swung the canoe about and paddled upstream. Afterward he said that Fate directed his course.

The slim paddle flashed up and down; the rhythmic play of muscles was soothing. He looked about. It was almost sundown. Gold in the western sky was reflected in the river, while the distant shore was curtained in spring mist. So calm and peaceful. He thought, How beautiful this land is!

He rounded a little bend and saw ahead a cluster of houses. "Cahokia," he said aloud.

He used to go there often. Now most of the fishermen and trappers he knew had gone away. Their shacks were taken over by English-speaking people who were strange to him. Deserted boats and fishing tackle lay strewn about the bank, but he saw a number of crude new cabins. The logs used had not been stripped of bark and were laid one on top of the other. The man in the canoe regarded them with distaste. He knew a village of Peorias was close by. He could see signs of the Indians' gardens beyond the settlement.

As he came nearer he heard the wild, thin wail of a fiddle. Somebody was playing gay dance music. He wondered if old Jocelin was about. That weazened, weather-beaten Canadian traveled far and wide. Always he and his fiddle were welcomed guests. But was Jocelin here entertaining the British? De Sable decided to go ashore and see.

He was surprised at the number of Indians standing around. He knew how older Indians deplored the fact that young men were deserting useful pursuits and wasting time following the whites. What were these Indians doing here now? Some of them greeted him. He returned their greeting but did not stop. The few whites he passed looked after him suspiciously.

The music led him to a store recently erected in the center of the town. As he approached he heard raucous laughter and loud voices. The door stood open. He mounted the log that served as a step and stopped, his frame filling the doorway.

The room was filled with smoke. Because of the fading light, however, part of it lay in shadows. It *was* old Jocelin. He had just finished a piece and the men, some standing, some lounging on seats, were clapping their hands. De Sable noted with some wonder that the group was made up of Indians and whites and his keen eyes told him that these whites were not Frenchmen. Old Jocelin accepted their applause with quick jerks of his little head, then he bowed with a flourish to one figure sprawled out on a bench. At that the man on the bench pulled himself to his feet. He stood wavering and unsteady, looking about the room which had suddenly grown still.

"Veery good—veery good, my man! I like eet veery much."

At the sound of the broken English, De Sable grasped the side of the door, his knees buckling under him. He felt the blood drain from his face as he stared at that grotesque figure. A drunken old man with bleary eyes and trembling lips! It was Pontiac! Pontiac, with a loud piece of calico draped over his leggings, dirty moccasins on his feet, a brocaded vest buttoned over his bare chest! Strands of hair fell loose about his face. He looked down at the fiddler, then with shaking hand he touched first his bare arms, his scrawny neck. A look of surprise crossed his face. But he fumbled in the pocket of his vest. His voice quivered.

"I would give you something—something for music. Sorry—veery sorry. Pontiac got nothing."

De Sable saw the grin on their faces; he saw the clerk behind the counter spit. His voice cracked through the room.

"Enough!"

They stared as the big man strode forward.

"Shame to you!" he hurled at them. He approached the old chief and took his hand reverently. He held it between his large hands and spoke softly: "My good father! What have they—?"

De Sable broke off. Why strain this failing strength with questions? It was all too evident what they had done and why.

Pontiac's haggard face seemed to fill. His eyes brightened.

"Jean Baptiste! My Jean Baptiste—son of Pointe de Sable!" There was something of the great chieftain in his voice now.

De Sable's eyes searched the darkening room. Where were his warriors? How could his people allow him to go about like this? Then a sudden thought struck him! Perhaps Pontiac had been kidnaped? That quick glance revealed the hostility that surrounded them. There was not a single Ottawa in the room. The Indian faces were as repellent as were the now scowling faces of the whites. He spoke urgently:

"Let us go from here, my father! I have my boat. Come with me!"

He did not heed the growling voices as he took the chief's arm. They were about to move to the door when the clerk at the desk called out angrily. He spoke in English so De Sable did not understand. Someone plucked at his sleeve. It was the fiddler whom he had forgotten.

"He says," the fiddler explained, "the chief bought something and did not pay."

"I'll pay. Where are the goods?" De Sable wheeled about.

Just then an Indian lad, whom De Sable thought he had seen before, came in and looked around until he located Pontiac. He came close and spoke to him. De Sable recognized the language of the Peoria. He understood enough to know that the boy was saying he had come to take the chief to his house. He heard a word which meant "eat." So Pontiac was not without friends even here. De Sable was glad to know this but he still intended to take him away at once. Pontiac was in danger here!

He walked to the counter and took a French louis out of his pouch. Coins were seldom used in the valley since goods were bought by exchange. But the trader always carried a few gold pieces for just such an emergency as this. He waited now for the clerk to deliver Pontiac's purchase. The clerk had laughed when old Jocelin interpreted the dark man's words. Now he grinned and simply pointed to an empty mug on the counter. De Sable's eyes narrowed. He understood. He turned back to the room.

The crowd had dispersed. He could see two of the Indians going down the street.

"Come," urged the boy.

"Walk ahead, my father," De Sable gestured toward the door. "I will join you in a moment." He waited until they passed through the door, then he looked at the clerk. His eyes were blazing. "You sold him rum! It's against the law. You sold it to him to ruin him! Take this, you vulture!" He flung the gold piece down on the counter. "And may it burn like a live coal in your hand!"

The clerk did not understand his words. All he saw was the threatening black woodsman towering over him. He reached for his gun.

"Jean Baptiste!" yelled the fiddler.

The warning was not needed. Already he had knocked the gun from the clerk's hand. It flew through the air and fell with a clatter among the merchandise as the big man flung himself out of the door.

He saw them through the dusk walking slowly along the road. The lad had the chief's arm. De Sable drew in a deep breath of the balmy spring air and caught the fragrance of blossoms somewhere close by. He felt much better and saluted several Indians standing near.

He was several yards behind the two when a dark figure darted out of the shadows immediately behind Pontiac. The flash of a knife, a shuffle of feet, then silently as it had appeared the figure darted away and Pontiac was alone in the road. For a moment which was an eternity he stood straight; his form seemed to grow and expand; then without a sound it crumpled.

In a leap De Sable reached his side. He did not know it was his own voice screaming, shouting to the skies, to the river, to the earth.

"Assassin! Murderer! Pontiac has been murdered."

Patter of many feet—a rising murmur of sound—shouts! Half a dozen persons saw the deed—saw the lad at his side slipping away into the darkness. An accomplice! Pontiac struck down by a Peoria!

Pontiac breathed spasmodically. De Sable bent over him trying to examine the wound. *Maybe he'll live. I must get help.* St. Louis lay just across the river. *St. Ange at the Fort! St. Ange is his friend. Father Meurin! Yes, take him across the river!*

While these thoughts were coursing through his mind De Sable was gently lifting the chief in his arms. No one stopped the grim-faced dark man as he walked to the river leaving a trail of blood on the ground behind him. The word sped ahead and people huddled together as he passed. A foul deed! Excitement was tinged with apprehension.

Eager hands helped him lower Pontiac into the canoe, then held the boat while he slipped in so that he could rest the wounded man's head on his lap. They waded out into the water, pushing the canoe, then stood sorrowfully watching it move away. The chief breathed easier now, and as De Sable lifted his paddle he stirred.

"Lie still, my father. You are hurt. I, Jean Baptiste, take you across the river where we'll find help. Rest easy. I shall not be long." The canoe shot forward.

"Put down your paddle, Jean Baptiste." The low voice paused as if to gather strength. "Shortly my spirit goes to join the spirit of my ancestors. Let us float down the river. Hear me. I must speak to you."

De Sable rested his paddle and bowed his head.

"Speak, my father!"

The Indian moved his hands. He gasped a little, then said:

"Loosen . . . belt. Take off."

De Sable bent over and ran his fingers along the beads of a wampum under the piece of calico. He untied the soft strips of skin and slowly pulled the belt from under the prostrate body.

It rippled and glistened in the faint light. Pontiac rested from this exertion, then spoke.

"I give you my belt—not for war but for peace. Go to the land of the Ottawa. This belt will tell them I send you. Deliver this message from their chief. These are my words. So be it." Pontiac had lapsed into his own tongue but, thanks to Otussa's teaching, De Sable could understand. The chieftain's body stiffened. He clenched his teeth. After a moment he relaxed and spoke again. "Let no more blood be spilt upon the land. Better white man take all than that Indian desecrate the land of our fathers with blood. Do not avenge my death. It is but a passing from here to there. The Great Spirit, the Spirit of Life calls the living to life. Let them live."

Across the river the lights of St. Louis began to show faintly. De Sable looked in that direction.

"I will deliver your message, my . . ." he began through stiff lips but a sob choked him.

The dying man clucked his tongue. "Weeping is for women, Oh son of Pointe de Sable," he murmured. The encircling shadows began to throb—a rhythm, like heartbeats, filled the air. Bare, thumping hands were beating on drumheads. The Indians were sending out the news. Pontiac heard.

"Lift me up! Let me look upon the Father of all rivers as my spirit flows from this poor body. Higher! Higher!"

The little boat rocked as De Sable propped him in his arms. The Indian stretched out his arms and began a chant. Some of the ancient words De Sable did not know but, as the dark man later recounted, Pontiac's chant ran something like this:

> *"Great Spirit, behold me on the river, lean to and hear my feeble voice. All things belong to you—the two-legged, the four-legged, the wings of the air and all green things that live. You have told me to lift my voice four times, once for each quarter of the earth, and you would hear me. Hear now, O Spirit of Life. I come to you unworthy with*

work undone. The tree is withered, my grandfather, and it has borne no fruit. I fail my people and they despair. Walk in my place upon this troubled land, O Spirit. Let all creation see your shining face. Bring Life to this troubled land. Life!"

The chieftain reached upward, straining as if he would touch the heavens. Then with a shudder he slumped down and was still.

De Sable held him in his arms. His scalding tears fell down on the peaceful face as the canoe drifted down the river. Stars pricked through the sky until the vast dome overhead was studded with jewels. Then singing drifted out across the river, singing with the beating drums. Lights sprang up along the shore. They were building fires to light the chieftain's way. The song swelled and the fires glowed brighter in the night. The water lapped gently as the birch canoe drifted on. *Pontiac is dead*, throbbed the drums. *Pontiac is dead.*

Shortly before dawn Father Meurin was wakened by loud pounding. His door was not latched so he sat up in bed and called out:

"Push the door open and enter!" He heard heavy feet dragging over the floor and then a man's hoarse voice.

"Father, I bring you the body of a good and noble soul—just gone to God. Where shall I rest it?"

The priest fumbled for his shawl. "A moment, my son," he said. "I come."

St. Ange de Bellerive arranged a fitting funeral for Pontiac in keeping with the chieftain's rank and station. He was buried with military honors in the churchyard. Indians and whites stood together with uncovered heads as the cortege passed. No one in the region saw anything strange about all this. They spoke of Pontiac as the great French chief—a valiant soldier and a man who always kept his word. In later years a lofty cathedral was erected where the log church then stood.

There was no doubt in anyone's mind but that the chief had been assassinated at the instigation of the British. They whispered of what would happen to the traitorous Peoria. De Sable knew he did not have much time. Even before the burial he went to the Osage and Missouri and told them what Pontiac had said. Pontiac did not want his death avenged! These tribes, under Pontiac's leadership, had defeated the white invaders at Mackinac, Sandusky, Miami, Ouiatanon and Venango. They had forced the redcoats to abandon Green Bay and Sault Ste Marie. The Indians knew Pontiac as a great fighter. Now they listened to the dark trader in grim silence. Even when he showed them the black and crimson belt they would not speak. De Sable knew that the only hope for stopping frightful bloodshed was to hasten to Canada and there convince the powerful Ottawa tribe of Pontiac's wishes. He told all this to his friends and partner to whom he had returned. Then he said:

"All my confusion cleared away while we floated down the river. I know now what I must do. Somewhere in this land there is a place where people can live together off the land. Indians have been doing it for ages. We have only come here. *We must learn from the Indians how they did it.*"

Clemorgan listened glumly. He made a gesture which included the river with its barges, the landings, houses and fields.

"And what of all this?" he asked.

De Sable frowned. "We've been thinking only of ourselves." He sighed. "Someday maybe things here can be made right. But look at those slaves!" He pointed to a group of ragged, scarred black men loading lead ore into a big boat. "They are already bringing slaves in here. The Indians are horrified."

"We'll never have slaves," protested Clemorgan indignantly.

"No," conceded De Sable, "but can we help spread slavery?"

"You can't blame slavery on the Spaniards only," said Clemorgan bitterly.

"Nor do I. And you are correct when you say it's foolish to consider the so-called rights of faraway kings. Those kings are not bothered about the people here and it is the people we've come to live with."

"Very well. I know you must carry out Pontiac's request. Go to Canada, talk with the Indians and look about you. We'll discuss this further when you come back."

De Sable turned away. He did not say that he would not return. After all he had no idea where he'd find such a place as he described, but first of all he must carry Pontiac's message to the Ottawa. He loaded a long, slender canoe with everything needed for an extended sojourn in the wilderness, then added a bundle of fine furs for exchange and sewed every gold piece he could secure in a hidden pocket of his jacket. Except for the short strip of land between the end of the Illinois River and Lake Michigan the entire trip would be made by water. Two Osage were going with him so they could advance quickly. Two men would ply the paddles while the third rested.

The day after Pontiac's body was lowered into hallowed ground, De Sable sped northward. When the two friends clasped hands in farewell they did not say "adieu" but "au revoir"—*till we meet again.*

9

"I Seek a Place"

For nearly a hundred years after an almost frozen La Salle dragged his boats and baggage through the ice and snow of that strip of land a league wide, which separated Lake Michigan from the river of the Illinois, Frenchmen had said they would build a ditch uniting the two. But when, in the spring of 1769, De Sable and his two Indian companions traveled up the Illinois and entered the little lake at the head of the river, there was no ditch to paddle through. Sand hillocks, bushes and scrub trees barred his way, while beyond were swamps where wild rice grew higher than a man's head.

The three men climbed out of the boat and sank into mire and slush. They fastened the loads onto their backs, lifted the emptied canoe over their heads, climbed the sand bars and stumbled on over twisting, snakelike roots. For a while they could scarcely see where they were going. Then they felt firm ground underfoot and emerged from the tangle. Before them stretched a lovely carpet of delicate pink. It rippled and De Sable saw slender green stalks topped with pink sprays that swayed in the breeze. Flowers were everywhere. Masses of violets huddled close to the thicket out of which they had come, while here and there were patches of buttercups and bluebells, but it was the pink flowers which carpeted the plain as far as he could see. The air was heavy with perfume. The weary travelers breathed deep and were impelled to lie down and go to sleep among the flowers. But the sun's rays were long. They must reach the lake by nightfall.

"How much farther?" De Sable asked.

One of the Indians shifted the canoe and peered up at the sky.

"Not far. That way Des Plains River. It flow into lake." He was pointing north.

De Sable looked but could see no sign of a river. Nevertheless he knew his guide, so without hesitation they turned north. He stepped carefully among the flowers and they brushed his legs. Several times he caught a pungent, unpleasant odor which made him wonder about the small animals living on this stretch of blooming prairie. Several times a dark, furry creature scuttled across their path. Once he thought he saw a skunk. When finally they reached the river he found the flowers growing all along the grassy banks.

"Can walk to lake from here," said the younger of the two Osage.

The other Indian grunted. "Better sense to ride," was his comment.

De Sable laughed. "I agree," he said as they lowered the canoe into the water.

No need to hurry now. They had the evening before them to rest on the beach, fix something to eat and then lie down for a long sleep. At dawn they would start on the second half of their journey.

De Sable reached out for one of the pink sprays. It eluded his grasp and he made an exclamation of annoyance. One of the Indians laughed.

"They are pretty," said De Sable, slightly nettled. "I've never seen anything quite like these plains."

"Every spring like this," said the older Indian, "but when sun climb high and get hot, flowers rot on ground. Then—oh, my!" He shook his head and held his nose with his fingers.

"*Es-chi-ka-gou!*" exclaimed the young Osage. He seemed to sneeze the syllables.

De Sable looked at the two of them. He was puzzled. "*Chi-ka-gou?*" he repeated.

"*Es-chi-ka-gou,*" corrected the Indian. "It means 'place of bad smells.' That's how Potawatomi call this place."

"Nonsense!" protested De Sable. "It can't be as bad as all that."

"You smell!" rejoined the Indian, grinning.

De Sable dipped his paddle in the water and thought that sometimes Indians did exaggerate shamelessly. The idea of calling that lovely garden of flowers, *es-chi-ka-gou!*

He saw Lake Michigan first with the long, low rays of a setting sun slanting over it. As he had heard, it was like the ocean. Not like *his* warm, glistening sea under deep blue skies. This water was gray and choppy like the Atlantic. The heaving swell went out to meet a pale sky. White gulls circled and dipped and the waves came in dashing upon rocks and running onto strips of sand. As they turned, a big wave slapped the side of the canoe. It was all the three could do to miss a huge boulder and make the beach without being capsized.

Someone was on the beach before them. The smell of smoke was unmistakable. As always in the wilderness the swift thought came: friend or foe? Which was it? Then De Sable saw the canoe pulled up on the sand and judged from its load that it belonged to some trapper coming out of the north country. Hardly had they placed their canoe in a safe spot than they were hailed: "Hello, there!"

Two men standing up ahead waved. De Sable returned their greeting. The trappers who had gotten up from beside a fire studied the newcomers as they came up the beach. The big fellow was dark but when he drew near he extended his hand and spoke like a Frenchman:

"Greetings, good friends!"

De Sable then saw several Indians standing to one side. When he turned to them and spoke quickly in Ottawa, one of the Indians scowled and shook his head.

"You speak their lingo?" asked one of the trappers. He was tall and lean, with long hair and tangled beard, in direct contrast to the other who was short and squat, with stubby hair all over his head and face. "They're Miami and live around here," continued the first man.

"I guess I don't speak their language," said De Sable ruefully. "I know only Ottawa. I tried that—and look at them."

The trapper glanced quickly at his companion. The short man spat into the fire.

"Sit down," he invited. His voice was guttural and rusty. De Sable threw himself down on the ground while the Osages walked over to the group of Indians. The trappers looked about a moment, then squat down on the ground.

"You Ottawa?" The guttural voice sounded casual, but the small eyes were fastened on De Sable's face.

"Oh, no!" De Sable saw how they were watching him. He wondered how much he should say. Pontiac's belt lay warm against his skin. He wore it under his clothes around his waist. "I'm from Santo Domingo." He spoke deliberately. "I've been a trapper on the Mississippi for several years."

"Ah-h-h," breathed the other trappers. They had not the remotest idea where Santo Domingo was but they were relieved to know that this man was some kind of an *étranger*. That explained everything.

"We're cooking a sturgeon." The tall man nodded toward a large fish which was sizzling and browning on a flat stone in the fire. "Plenty for everybody."

"It smells good! I've biscuit here and cold duck." De Sable laid open his pack. "Where are you from?"

"We been up around Fort Mackinac all winter." It was the tall trapper who answered. "Lord, 'twas cold up there!" He hunched his shoulders and shivered.

De Sable grinned. "What's news?" This was the question always asked by men who met in the wilderness, but De Sable's heart was thumping.

The short man leaned forward and whispered huskily. "Ain't you heard, mister?" De Sable looked at him inquiringly. He paused and then hissed, "*Indians on the warpath!*"

So it had come! I'm too late, thought De Sable, despairingly. The tall trapper nudged him in the ribs and nodded toward the group of Indians.

"Look at 'em! Plotting together."

The Indians were sitting in a circle, gesticulating with their hands and talking in low tones. It was clear to De Sable that the Osage and Miami did not understand each other too well and were therefore falling back upon the oldest and most universal of languages—signs.

"War belts passing and drums going all night. It's awful!"

The short trapper shrugged his shoulders. "I'm not so scared. 'Tain't white people they're after." He looked at De Sable. "But, mister, *you* come talking Ottawa around here and first thing you know . . ." He made a scalping motion around his head.

"But I thought the British had . . ." began De Sable.

"Say, where you been?" asked the tall trapper. "Ain't you heard how some Illinois Indians killed the Ottawa's great chief Pontiac? We just hope to get out of here before all hell breaks loose."

"Of course I heard about Pontiac's being killed." De Sable spoke quickly. "But that happened just a few days before I left St. Louis. How could a war start way up here so soon?"

"Runners! You don't know Indians when they send out runners and drums. News spreads faster than a prairie fire. These Indians are getting ready to wipe out that place where the chief was murdered—and once lighted, God knows how far the fire will go!"

What a fool he had been! While he was breaking his back paddling up the Mississippi and Illinois rivers Indian couriers had sped across country, reached the Ottawa and their allies and the war which Pontiac had told him to prevent was under way. He should have known better. Suddenly De Sable clapped his hand to his head. The Osage! *They did know.* They had tricked him! All these days they had pretended to be hurrying but they had been laughing at him!

The two trappers stared at their guest as he leaped to his feet, his face thunderous. Without a word of explanation he strode over to the group of Indians.

"Shaubena!" he called sharply.

The elder of the two Osage got up immediately and came toward him.

"What is it, Jean Baptiste?" the Indian asked calmly.

De Sable was so angry he could hardly control his voice.

"You knew!" he almost shouted. "You knew we'd not reach Canada in time. You knew the couriers would get there long before me!"

The Indian regarded him without blinking. "You asked us to go with you in the canoe. You did not ask about a shorter route." Flat statements of fact.

"You knew my reason for going." Anger was running away into sorrow. "I wanted to prevent a war. Pontiac asked me to prevent bloodshed."

"Such things may not be in your hands, Jean Baptiste. The spirits of our ancestors must be consulted at such times. You shall keep your promise to Pontiac."

"You tricked me," said De Sable bitterly.

He turned away and walked slowly toward the lake. Shaubena stood looking after him a moment, then returned to his group. They, too, had started a fire.

Night was falling. The waves looked cold and dark and the few remaining birds croaked and called as if vainly searching for homing companions. There was a chill in the air. De Sable thought these waters lonely and unhappy. He shivered and knew his thoughts were merely a reflection of his feelings. He went back to the two trappers.

"I must apologize for my seeming discourtesy," he said before he sat down."If you will permit I'll tell you the trouble."

"What's upset you, mister? Couldn't understand what you said to that Indian but you sure lashed into him." The trapper sat back to enjoy the recounting. They had cut the fish and now the other trapper indicated a portion smoking on a large shell which he pushed toward De Sable.

"Have some," he grunted.

De Sable took the shell. He was not hungry.

"I'm on my way to the Ottawa with a message from Pontiac, their chief," he began.

"What?"

"You say Pontiac?"

He did not tell them the whole story of Pontiac's death. That wasn't necessary and he felt in no mood for the recitation. But he did tell them how earnestly the chieftain wanted to prevent more fighting.

"Now, who'd 'a' thought that of Pontiac!" The little man sucked in his breath in amazement. "Always heard he was the most bloodthirsty of the lot."

"He was only fighting to save his people. All that he asks now is that white men live at peace with his people."

"Why did an Indian kill him? 'Cause he'd quit fighting?" asked the bearded one.

"I don't know. I don't know why any Indian would kill Pontiac. No matter what the British . . ." De Sable checked himself. He had resolved not to spread the rumor rampant in Missouri.

But the trapper's keen ears had heard. He nodded his head. "So that's how 'tis!" He jerked at his beard. "Hum-m-m. This is worse than I thought."

For a while they sat staring into the fire. Then the tall man stirred and looked over his shoulder toward the Indians. He jerked his finger in their direction.

"You know what that big Miami told me?" He leaned forward. "He told me there used to be a city right here in these plains, said long ago his grandfathers lived in a city near this lake!"

"Indians always lying about cities," growled the squat little man. "Who'd build a city in this wilderness? On the seacoast, yes, but where can anybody get from that lake?" He pointed toward the water with a fishbone.

"You're crazy," remonstrated the first trapper. "Right here where we're sitting is a regular route for traders. Anybody can travel from the Atlantic Ocean right down to the Gulf of Mexico by just going over this very trail. This would be a fine place to build a city. What do you think, mister?"

"Eh, what?" Sunk in his own thoughts, De Sable had scarcely heard this last exchange.

"He says this would be a fine place to build a city!" The trapper ran his hand through his tousled hair and grinned. "Imbecile!"

"I am not an imbecile!" the tall man shouted. "I say this is the most important trade junction in all America! Deny that if you can, Henri Du Pré! This is a fine site, a magnificent site, a perfect site. . . ." He was shaking his fist.

"Calm yourself! Calm yourself, my friend," the little man implored. "You say it is a good place." He shrugged his shoulders. "So be it."

"Well!" the big man snorted. The other surreptitiously winked his eye at De Sable who could not repress a smile. Not until the first man had calmed down did he venture a remark.

"I wonder why there is no trading post here. Since traders pass this way all the time I should think it would be profitable."

"There have been trading posts," snapped the first trapper. "The last white man who tried it simply vanished. Nobody ever knew what happened to him."

"The saints protect us!" ejaculated the little man piously.

His companion eyed him suspiciously before continuing. "Because this is an important place, Indians have always fought over it. No one trader can stay here. It's dangerous!"

"I'm looking for a place," offered De Sable.

"You looking for a place to build a city?" The squat little man wheezed out his question with an impish grin. He winked his eye again.

De Sable laughed. "Do you two go on like this all the time?" he asked.

He was glad to have their companionship. He could not go on until morning but, tired as he was, he could not lie down to sleep. Should he set out from here on foot? De Sable's destination was the small peninsula between St. Clair and Lake Erie. This was now the seat of the Ottawa tribe. Here he would find Pontiac's sons. The water route would take him the length of Lake Michigan, down through the great lake of the Huron and into the small lake of St. Clair. On foot he could go around the end of Lake Michigan and head due east to the Maumee River, thence to Lake Erie. If only he had a horse!

The trappers were dubious. British forts were in the vicinity. They, too, would be in an evil mood.

"You'd get lost sure," said the tall trapper. "And after what you tell us 'bout your Indians I wouldn't trust 'em."

"This ain't no time for strangers to be trespassing on Indian trails," added the one called Du Pré.

De Sable knew they were right. After a while they wrapped themselves in blankets and stretched out.

Neither moon nor stars lighted the night. There was only the sound of the surf—the constant, steady beat of waves upon the shore. Gradually De Sable's consciousness merged with the rhythmic beat. He sank down into the waves of sound. He slept and the beating of the surf became the beat of many feet. He heard them—hundreds of feet, thousands of feet, a countless throng of feet—moving all about him. He heard the hurrying, restless feet walking through the flowers. He turned in his sleep. The feet were pressing in against him. He wondered where they were going.

Before the sun was up the two parties were on their separate ways. De Sable was determined to use every minute of daylight. The Osage were never talkative. This morning after his brief greeting De Sable addressed nothing further to them. All that he could do now was to push ahead as rapidly as possible, but he had not forgiven Shaubena. He tried not to think of what was already under way.

That night was clear and bright with a moon lighting up the shore. De Sable would not let them stop. They paddled on until the moon faded. Only then did they pull up on the shore and rest.

So the next day passed and the next. They were making good time. And then the storm came up. The morning had been clear. Midafternoon wind suddenly rose on the lake and the bellows climbed. They had difficulty in landing and saving their canoe; all three had to jump into the water and drag the canoe ashore. The sky turned dark.

For three days they dared not set their bark down in the lashing waters. For three days they tramped over rocks, through woods and long waving grass, loads strapped to their backs, carrying the canoe. One night they spent in an Indian village. They were Chippewa, closely allied with the Ottawa. Some

Ottawa words were familiar to them so they received De Sable as a friend.

When finally they were able to resume their journey on the lake, De Sable had made a decision. By now he, too, had heard the war drums. He knew there was no mistake about what the Indians were planning. The British also would know this. The British would know that the French laid the death of Pontiac at the British door. Serious Indian warfare would inevitably mean a renewal of war between English and French peoples in America. Thus it was that De Sable reasoned. He resolved therefore to stop at Detroit and convey Pontiac's injunction to his people directly to the British. He would tell the British how earnestly Pontiac tried to prevent bloodshed.

Lieutenant Jehu Hays was not the senior officer in charge of Detroit. He was, however, newly appointed Commissioner on Indian Affairs. Lieutenant Hays happened to be the only officer in the blockhouse which served as headquarters the morning a large, powerful-looking Negro entered the room and after a hurried glance around, came straight to the table where he sat. Lieutenant Hays frowned. The fellow's deerskin jacket and breeches were streaked with mud. A piece of skin was wrapped about his head and he wore dirty moccasins like an Indian. He was unshaven and his eyes were bloodshot.

"What do you want in here?" the lieutenant asked sharply.

The black man let loose a flow of unintelligible speech. Lieutenant Hays had only a passing acquaintance with French. After a moment he motioned sharply for silence.

"François!" he called.

He need not have shouted since François was already staring in at the door. The shabby figure advanced and the lieutenant jerked his finger in the direction of the intruder.

"See if you can understand him."

François' eyes widened and he trembled with excitement as he interpreted. According to what Lieutenant Hays later wrote his superior officer Sir Johnson, this "self-styled trader" was the one who buried Pontiac. He told some weird story about having taken the dying chief to St. Louis and he quoted what he said were Pontiac's last words. He insisted that Pontiac "forgave" everybody, that he didn't want the Indians to fight over his death.

Just why the black should come to him with all this the lieutenant couldn't understand. What did the French hope to gain by sending him? When Lieutenant Hays severely asked him who sent him, the fellow answered: *"Pontiac!"*

When he finally got rid of him the lieutenant sent someone after him to see where he went. His scouts reported that the Negro climbed into a canoe with two Indians and headed across the river.

De Sable knew that his visit had been futile. He was already too disheartened and tired to worry about how a British officer received what he tried to say. He simply put the stupid face out of his mind. At long last the canoe beached at the foot of the Ottawa village opposite Detroit.

The Ottawa were expecting him. He did not ask how this could be. There was Otussa, Pontiac's youngest son, at the water's edge to welcome him. And coming down the beach with a number of elders of the tribe was the village chief, holding a smoking calumet in his hand. De Sable accepted the pipe and puffed upon it before speaking. He returned it and stood silent while the chief drew deep upon the pipe and then said:

"We welcome you in peace, Honorable Messenger!"

"I greet you in peace," responded De Sable.

The chief and elders stepped to one side and Otussa said:

"Now you must wash and eat. Come this way."

De Sable's first impulse was to protest. He wanted to deliver his message, to sit down with these men of Ottawa and stop the preparations for war. He knew, however, that he dare not offend good taste. All things must be done properly and in good order.

They brought buckets of water and clean clothing. He bathed and with a small, sharp-edged shell shaved all the stubble off his face, leaving it clean and smooth. He heard the soft padding of feet, the voices of children, the barking of dogs. He heard a young girl laughing and felt a tingle of pleasure course through him. It was as if after a long and painful journey he had come home. After a short interval Otussa returned with a girl bearing a smoking platter of food.

Somewhere close by a drum sounded, the beating low and insistent. The lights of the village twinkled. Darkness and mist made dim blue shadows as Otussa and De Sable silently crossed the gardens, passing houses where tallow dips gave faint light through narrow slits, and drew near the council ground. Eight poles had been firmly set in the clearing and bound at the top with strong sinews. The top was covered with mats. The entrance to the lodge faced east, the departing door west. With the fire for the center, a hard-packed circle about twelve feet across had been left clear before the lodge. Around this sat a circle of chiefs and elders. Facing this group and in a fanlike semicircle sat a host of people. De Sable saw that the outermost fringe behind the young men was made up of women. As they made way for Otussa to pass through, an occasional flare of the council fire lighted a bent form, a bit of bright calico or a sweet, patient face. Groups of young men and boys eyed them curiously as they passed; sullen men sitting cross legged, with arms folded or resting on their knees, looked the tall, dark stranger up and down.

Otussa led the guest to the cleared space. The chief motioned him to a place near the fire where had been spread a soft carpet of otter skins. This was the place of honor. On one arm gleamed his silver bracelet, across the other lay the black and crimson belt.

De Sable now realized that the gathering was not limited to Ottawa. He recognized the signs of other tribes. The beating of the drum ceased when De Sable took his place.

When the silence had been unbroken for several minutes, the Ottawa chief arose. He was an old man and therefore not a war chief but a counselor. His face was unpainted. Around his head he wore a band of twisted gold, a single feather standing high in the back. His arms were bare. The robe drawn about his body and extending well below his knees was of softest skins, thickly beaded.

The medicine man, squatted silently by the fire, lifted a red stone pipe from whose long stem dangled strips of beaded cloth and bright feathers. He took a brand from the fire and lighted it, then handed the pipe to the chief. Silently the old chief turned its stem to the north, south, east and west, then upward and downward to the earth. He took one puff and handed it gravely to De Sable, who this evening ranked higher than any visiting chief. De Sable understood, puffed the pipe and handed it to a nearby chief. It passed on and on, its progress marked by the clouds of smoke rising and mingling. No one spoke, no one moved. The fire crackled and burned.

When the pipe had made the rounds the chief lifted his hand.

"Greetings, honored friend! Greetings, noble chiefs! Greetings, friends of many tribes—Chippewa, Potawatomi, Huron, Winnebago and those good friends from across the Mississippi River, the Osage."

There was a murmur of response. He paused until it swelled and died away.

"Not all the tribes who fought with Pontiac are represented here, but we here and all those others, wherever they may be, remember."

"Ah, yes! Remember!" The response came in a mighty chorus. When all was still again the chief continued:

"We have come to know much sorrow. Sorrow rises with us at dawn, nor does it leave our side when we lie down to sleep. Let our spirit bear witness before the Great Spirit of these things. And now the evil hand of our enemies strikes down Pontiac!"

The rumbling growl sickened De Sable's heart. He looked out at all those grim, menacing faces and knew that only Pontiac himself could change the course they had already chosen. Someone threw a stick on the fire and it flared up. That was when De Sable saw *her* face.

She was leaning forward. In her eagerness to see and hear she had crowded in beyond the ring of women. The young men on either side of her did not seem to mind. Evidently they had made a place for her, perhaps with their own strong shoulders pushing others aside. Her red lips were just a little parted and her eyes were fastened on him. He had seen a bird poised on the edge of a rock take just that pose. She waited for something and whatever it was it promised joy and gladness and happiness. He could not take his eyes from her face. He missed what the chief was saying. He heard without heeding the responses. She smiled and his heart gave a leap. Suddenly he realized with a start that the chief was talking about him!

". . . He succored Pontiac when he fell. He bore our chieftain aloft. To him Pontiac bequeathed his belt. Hear Jean Baptiste Pointe de Sable!"

They acclaimed him as he stood proud and straight before them. In that moment he was glad to be himself. He wanted *her* to see how tall and strong he was. He wanted her to know how much the great Pontiac trusted him. His voice was firm and clear.

"Honorable chiefs, my friends, my brothers! I call you brothers because the Great Spirit fashions all men alike, because all life streams run red, because I, too, called Pontiac my father. I listened to him. I honored him. I loved him."

They were very still. A stick burning in the fire crackled. A sudden breeze rustled through the trees. His voice softened.

"Even while I caught his red blood in my hands your chief thought of you, his people. He entrusted me with a message for you. I lift his belt, crimson as the stream of life flowing from his body, and swear I speak the truth. These are his words to you." He paused a moment, drew in a breath and spoke with great solemnity:

" '*Let no more blood be spilt upon the land. Better white man take all than that Indian desecrate the land of our fathers with blood. Do not avenge my death. It is but passing from here to there. The Great Spirit—the Spirit of Life—calls the living to life. Let them live.*' "

He added nothing further, only stood motionless, holding aloft the beaded belt. In the light of the flames the wampum rippled and glowed like a living thing.

10

Indian Love Call

Her name was Kittihawa, which in Potawatomi means "fleet-of-foot." She belonged to the gens, or clan of Misshawo, the Elk. She had come with her mother, father and two brothers to attend the council meeting.

De Sable learned these facts when he pointed her out to Otussa the next morning. With several other girls, she went by where they were sitting. She was very slight. The top of her shining head would be much below his shoulder. This morning she reminded him of a little doll, a delicate little china doll, such as he had seen in New Orleans. He sighed.

Otussa expressed no surprise at this unusual burst of questioning. Five full cycles had passed since he taught the strange dark Frenchman his tongue. Now he heard his friend Jean Baptiste speaking fluently, noted his ease of manner and saw him thoroughly familiar with their ways. Otussa was therefore certain that their visitor would not ask such questions without reason.

"You have not yet taken a wife, Jean Baptiste?" Otussa asked.

De Sable stared at the lad while the question sank into his mind. For the first time his tumultuous thinking about the girl took some form. A wife! Until that moment no such idea had occurred to him.

"No, I have not." He shook his head thoughtfully. "You see, Otussa, I have been traveling about—so far from—" his eyes veiled and he stumbled over his words—"from—everything." He had started to say "from home" and he meant that shell-colored house shaded by palm trees, with gardens all around—his mother's house. Otussa saw the pain in his dark eyes when De Sable added, "I have no house for a wife. I shall have to build one somewhere."

Otussa smiled. "Oh, no, Jean Baptiste. First, find the wife. 'Tis the wife makes the house." Then eagerly, "You like Kittihawa?"

But De Sable was suddenly depressed. What nonsense was he thinking? How could he take a wife? Where would he take her? Through warring tribes back to St. Louis? He jerked his head angrily. What an idiot he was! Otussa's bright eyes were fixed on him waiting for an answer to his question. De Sable shrugged his shoulders.

"She's a pretty child," he said indifferently. "No doubt she'll make some brave a good enough wife—when she grows up."

Otussa looked puzzled. Then he smiled to himself and asked no more questions.

There were other things to think about. Though De Sable had been acclaimed and the chiefs accepted his message with humility, he was told that already warriors were in Illinois. They were led by Minavavana, chief of the Chippewa, lifelong friend and ally of Pontiac. He felt that the Ottawa chief's assassination called for personal revenge. And with him marched Pontiac's two elder sons. Minavavana was in high favor with the French, which meant that his efforts would further stir them up against the British. It was decided to send a courier to Minavavana with Pontiac's message. But all knew that, once engaged, Minavavana would not retreat.

"Rest here with us," the village chief urged De Sable. "Our visiting chiefs return to council with their people. We shall meet again."

On the third day came news. De Sable listened while the panting courier blurted out his story:

Fighting swept through the Illinois country. Some of the Illinois had joined the Peoria but more fought against them. The British at Fort de Chartres were furnishing powder, lead and rum. But when the Peoria chief Kineboo sought protection within the fort for himself and his villagers he was refused. Kineboo therefore led a large contingent into the region they had abandoned years before, taking refuge in an old, crumbling fort near the settlement of Au Pé. Here they were besieged by Minavavana. Not a single Illinois Indian escaped from that rock! Minavavana sent his greetings.

A whoop of joy went up. De Sable asked one question.

"What are the British doing?"

"They make no move as yet."

At the touch of a hand on his arm De Sable turned to find Otussa beside him.

"I must go to our mother. Will you accompany me?"

They left the village almost immediately, traveling on horseback. Otussa observed the dark man's straight back and remembered his clumsy efforts when he first sat astride the shaggy pony.

"My mother lives on Indianola Island at the mouth of the Maumee River. I was born there. We'll find a boat at Pointe de Sable." An exclamation of pleasure from De Sable brought the added comment, "Oh, yes, that's the place which bears your father's name. It's only a couple of leagues away."

They rode between well-cultivated fields, orchards and through woods. The sun was hot on their bare backs. The cool shade of the trees was always welcome.

"They're cutting down too many trees in here," said Otussa sadly. "This is very bad. But we're crowded within a small space. We use the wood faster than it has time to grow. Once the Ottawa, Chippewa and Potawatomi inhabited all the land from the great river which flows into the sea—you call it the St. Lawrence—to the lake of the Huron. We were indeed one mighty tribe, with these names merely designating clans. You'd have no trouble addressing a Potawatomi. The difference between our language and theirs is very slight." He brushed aside an overhanging twig and looked back at De Sable. "Kittihawa would understand you."

De Sable had not succeeded in putting her out of his mind. But he had not seen her again.

"I suppose she's gone home." He spoke carelessly.

"No," said Otussa. "Her father left her and her mother here with us. He and the boys went back to defend their village. She lives near the lake which the French call Peoria, and that's near Au Pé where the worst fighting has been."

"Oh, I see." De Sable said no more.

Their horses stumbled in the sandy earth strewn with needles and pine cones. They came out into the open and De Sable saw ahead a number of poor houses scattered over sand dunes that went down to sparkling blue water. He could hear the dashing of waves.

"This is Pointe de Sable!" Otussa made a wide gesture with his hand. He pointed toward a clump of pines growing on a ledge overlooking the water. "My father was born up there."

De Sable sat silent on his horse, turning his eyes this way and that. Here was wild, desolate beauty! Earth and sky and water—naked and strong and spacious. Clean, swift air, the hard rays of the sun and the pine trees pointing like fingers to heaven! This was more like Haiti than any place he had seen in America. With a quick laugh he touched his horse with his heels and went galloping across the sand toward the water. The rush of air was good. The smell was good. It was good to be alive!

Otussa followed at a more leisurely pace. As he approached a weather-stained shack at the edge of the water, a small, wizened figure hurried out to meet him.

"Greetings, Pepi!" Otussa called. "Have you a boat for us today?"

"Descend, young man. Pepi has many boats for the son of Pontiac!" The old man's face was like a withered apple but his black eyes danced. "What news? What news?"

"Good news, old man! The hand that slew Pontiac will slay no more. Chief Minavavana has wiped out the Peoria."

"Whoopee!" The old Indian's jubilant cry caused De Sable to turn his head. He saw the flapping arms and spindly legs dancing around Otussa and smiled understandingly. He did not hear Pepi's panting inquiry after the lad slid to the ground.

"And who is that one?"

"One trusted by Pontiac. Note his belt."

With surprising agility the old man sped across the sand and watched the dark figure dismount. Through squinting eyes he examined the newcomer.

The stranger was very dark, his smooth body naked to the waist, unmarked. His long, bushy hair was drawn back from his face and tied with a string at the back of his neck. On one arm gleamed a silver bracelet and around his neck was a string carrying a little bag such as Indians often wore. Pepi knew it contained quick and effective remedies for snake bite and other poisons. His deerskin breeches were fringed around the bottom and his moccasins were beaded. But it was the gleaming belt looped around his waist that caused Pepi's eyes to jump. He had seen such a belt on the great Pontiac!

De Sable stood silent during this scrutiny. It was fitting that the old man speak first. The thin arm shot upward.

"Greetings, friend! Many welcomes to an honored friend." The old man spoke with solemn formality. And De Sable answered in kind.

"I thank you, old warrior."

Pepi grunted his delight and hurried away. A few minutes later the two were skimming over the water in his finest white birch canoe. De Sable looked back.

"I should like to live at Pointe de Sable!"

Otussa shook his head. "Only fishermen can live there. Even animals find little to eat on that poor land. It is far from all trade routes. No, Jean Baptiste, my people had to move off Pointe de Sable."

The lad's words saddened De Sable. He continued to look back. How he wished this could have been "the place"!

The August sun was hot. They were grateful when it dropped behind the hills and a cool breeze whipped across the waves. Ahead lay the entrance to the Maumee River.

"Lake Erie can be dangerous here," warned Otussa. "Watch the current!"

The force of the river pushed against them as they bent over their paddles. The canoe skirted several small green islands before Otussa called out:

"There's Indianola!"

De Sable could see the river dividing into two wide channels around a spearhead of land on which rose a magnificent grove of tall trees. In the purple twilight they landed on the north bank. Scattered about on the slope was a village.

"Wait for me here," said Otussa after they beached their canoe. "This is the period of my mother's mourning. I must prepare her for your arrival."

De Sable extended his hand. "Is it not unseemly for you to disturb the noble woman, your mother?"

"Ah, no!" Otussa smiled. "The time has come to break her fast. Tonight Kantuckeegun will rejoice." He disappeared between the trees and De Sable sat down near the upturned canoe. The evening was peaceful and still.

As Otussa surmised, Kantuckeegun, his mother, was not in their house on the hill. It stood dark and empty. The blackened firestones in the middle of the big room were cold. He found her in an isolated tent lying on a bed of hemlock boughs. Her face was blackened with charcoal and she wore a single straight garment cut from worn wolf skin.

Otussa lifted the flap of the tepee and called:

"Arise, my mother! The days of your mourning are ended. Your sons, my brothers, have avenged our father. They bid you rise and eat. The spirit of our father Pontiac bids you serve the living."

The woman came quickly to the entrance. She pressed Otussa's hand close to her breast but did not speak. The son waited until the wild pounding of her heart subsided, then he said gently:

"I bring a guest, that one loved and trusted by Pontiac. He hungers."

"Leave me," said the woman softly. "I shall make preparations."

Otussa dropped the door flap and walked slowly through the trees. It was dark but the winding river was a softly gleaming highway. De Sable looked up at the sound of his footsteps but asked no questions. For some time the two sat watching the stars light up the sky. Then Otussa said, "Come," and they climbed the hill behind them. De Sable unfastened Pontiac's belt and carried it in his hand.

The tall dark man bowed low before Pontiac's widow. Without speaking, he laid the gleaming wampum across her outstretched arm. For a moment she did not move, then with her other hand she touched the beads tenderly and murmured something not meant for their ears. She lifted her beautiful brown eyes to him and said:

"I welcome you to Pontiac's hearth. You shall sit in his place beside the fire and I shall serve you from his bowl." She held out the belt for him to take.

"I do not deserve such honor, Kantuckeegun! Give me the lowest place beside your fire. Even there I shall be unworthy." She smiled and waited until he accepted the belt.

"Come!" was all she said.

She led him to one of the raised cubicles along the side of the wall. It was draped and covered with soft skins. A large bark basin contained water for washing. De Sable's eyes followed her when she went back to the fire where something savory filled the air with redolent fumes. Only his mother had such a sweet, calm face. Her hair, parted in the middle, hung in two thick braids across her full bosom. Her rounded arms below the fringe of her beaded jacket looked soft and capable. She seemed taller than most of the Indian women he had seen and also seemed wrapped in a kind of somber dignity which did not lack sweetness and compassion. Quite unexpectedly De Sable found himself asking: "Could Kittihawa ever look like her?"

The house was large and commodious. It was made of birch logs—peeled clean and fortified against cold and rain. It was sweet smelling and airy but there was only the one room. The only privacy offered were the raised cubicles which served as bed and dressing room. So for the first time since childhood De Sable lay awake at night and heard the gentle breathing of a woman sleeping close by, heard her stirring about at dawn, was served at breakfast by her. He loved the soft, gentle tone of her voice, drew her out with eager questions. Gradually he talked to her about his mother—told her how she died—and Kantuckeegun mothered the tall, dark young man.

August was the laziest time of the year. Gardens and orchards were full, harvest not yet begun and the days were long and warm. In the mornings the visitor fished or roamed through the woods, sometimes in company with other young men from the village, sometimes only with Otussa. But the long afternoons were usually spent under the big trees surrounding the house.

Kantuckeegun was close by, her hands always occupied, but near enough to join in the talk.

On one warm day De Sable had just returned from a swim. He lay on the ground contentedly watching Kantuckeegun draw an unbroken thread from a bark in her lap and wrap it around the distaff she held in her hand. This bark thread he knew would later be woven into cloth. He thought of Kittihawa's hands and asked:

"Kantuckeegun, did you know the noble Pontiac when you were a little girl?"

She smiled and shook her head.

"I was not born an Ottawa. My people were Miami."

"You were!" De Sable sat up in his surprise. "Well, how did you—how did it happen—?" He stopped, embarrassed.

Kantuckeegun lifted her clear eyes for a moment.

"We saw each other," she said softly. "After that he brought gifts to our door—beautiful gifts."

"But did you—did you—talk?" The young man almost stammered in his eagerness.

Kantuckeegun nodded her head. Her eyes shone. "We talked," she said.

Otussa rolled over on his belly.

"Jean Baptiste has seen Kittihawa." Mother and son exchanged glances.

Kantuckeegun rested her hands in her lap. She looked hard at the dark visitor sitting dumb at her feet. Her eyes crinkled.

"Little Kittihawa!" She murmured the name tenderly.

"You know her?" asked De Sable.

"I know her mother and her grandmother. She is well trained."

De Sable chewed thoughtfully on a blade of grass.

That evening after the meal was finished De Sable spoke slowly:

"I think, good Kantuckeegun, we should return. I have rested too long."

She did not seek to hold them. On the second morning as they were about to leave she showed them a most beautiful garment. It was a white doeskin jacket, with all the edges of the fine skin finished with fringe, a border of white and red beads running down the sleeves and a beaded design on both sides of the open front.

"A gift for Kittihawa," said the woman holding it out to De Sable.

He stammered his thanks and took the lovely thing gingerly. She laughed and, taking it back, wrapped it carefully in smooth bark cloth. Then she added it to other bundles they were taking to the canoe.

The trip back seemed very long. De Sable did not even try to conceal his impatience. But his arrival brought no happiness. Kittihawa and her mother had gone.

"I have carried out my mission. We shall take the short route back through Illinois." Now De Sable ignored all dangers of such a trip. But hardly were the words out of his mouth than the village chief sent for him.

"Friend Jean Baptiste," he said, "Minavavana refuses to heed our words. He has been joined by Charlot Kaské, the Shawnee chief whose hatred for the British is so intense he will stop at nothing. We deem it necessary that you go to these chiefs, that you visit other tribes. Only thus will our people be convinced that Pontiac wants peace."

Only Otussa knew what De Sable's ready assent cost him. But he had a cheering word for his friend.

"Do not worry. Kittihawa will wait."

"Wait!" exclaimed De Sable despairingly. "How can she wait for something she knows nothing about?"

"She knows." While De Sable stared at him the lad explained calmly, "Osawagin told Kittihawa you liked her."

"What? How could your sister tell the maiden such a thing?"

Otussa shrugged his shoulders in exact imitation of De Sable's frequent gesture. He spread his hands and, speaking through his nose, said:

"*Eh, bien! Tu connais les femmes!*" which was French for "You know women!"

De Sable laughed. "You rascal! You smart little rascal!" he said, and a great load rolled off his mind.

But Otussa would not have thought it would be nearly two years—months of traveling far and wide by birch canoe and on horseback. Wherever De Sable went he sat in council with former allies of Pontiac. At long last they heeded that noble chief's injunction to answer the "call of the living." And though there were repeated provocations throughout the West an uneasy peace prevailed.

Only then was De Sable free to go about his own affairs. He turned his horse in the direction of the Vermilion River and the village where Kittihawa lived. How dared he think she would be waiting! At one moment he called himself a fool and was cast down with despair. The next he was sure of her and his spirits soared.

The Potawatomi chief welcomed the distinguished visitor with all ceremony. He and the elders smoked the calumet and sat down together for the eating, but very soon it was clear to all that the renowned Jean Baptiste de Sable had not come to counsel with the village fathers. On the first evening of his arrival he was seen walking in the moonlight with pretty Kittihawa! Since gossip in Indian villages spreads as rapidly as anywhere else, that night there was much buzzing and nodding of heads. But in the morning the parents of Kittihawa showed their neighbors the fine antelope and two silken beaver pelts laid at their front door during the night. This was tantamount to asking for their daughter's hand in marriage. Kittihawa's father showed that the skins were unharmed by powder burns. The antelope had been brought down with an arrow.

It was, however, to Kittihawa's grandmother that De Sable had to present his suit, since women attended to such important matters among the Potawatomi.

At the proper time the nervous lover went to the old lady. She received him alone, sitting on a bearskin before the fire. The bearskin marked this as a very important occasion. De Sable stumbled over what he had to say as young men have stumbled under like circumstances since time immemorial. And the old lady listened as closely as if it were all new to her. When De Sable finally closed his lips and drew a deep breath in relief she shattered that relief with:

"Kittihawa cannot become the squaw woman of a white man."

The statement was so preposterous that De Sable gasped.

"But I—madame—I am not a—white man! I ask Kittihawa for my wife!"

The old woman shook her head. "Kittihawa cannot leave her tribe. She must marry a Potawatomi."

De Sable stared at her blankly. No one had warned him of anything like this! Why, Pontiac's wife had not been an Ottawa! The young man was outraged. He wanted to scream at the calm old lady. But he dare not. What was he to say? She was watching him through bright little eyes.

"Madame—I—I—love your granddaughter. For a long time—a very long time—we have waited. Look at me! *I am not a white man.*"

"No," she conceded, "and you are not an Indian." De Sable groaned. Her little eyes twinkled and she added softly: "Our tribe could adopt you."

"Adopt me?" asked De Sable stupidly.

"Yes—yes." The little lady tapped her fingers impatiently.

"One of the gens could take you in as a son. In that case you would be a Potawatomi. Would you like to be a Potawatomi?"

The question came so unexpectedly that De Sable gulped. He thought of how Jacque would laugh at his dilemma and he spoke stiffly:

"If to have Kittihawa for my wife I must join the tribe I will become a Potawatomi."

The little lady smiled.

"Do not reach your decision hastily. Take time to think about it." She rose as a gesture of dismissal but added, "If our maidens leave the tribe, who shall be the mothers of our sons?"

He did not attempt to answer her question but bowed and went out. The young man was deeply moved. For the first time he thought of himself in relation to sons. He walked slowly through the trees. Although Kittihawa would be expecting him in the fields, he turned down toward the river. He wanted to be alone—to search himself for the answer to: *What am I doing for my sons?*

The next few days were uneasy ones. Kittihawa accepted the verdict calmly. Her Jean Baptiste would work it out. Faith in him had kept her waiting two years. She knew now what he would do. He had little choice. On the third day he returned to Kittihawa's grandmother. This time their talk was very short and De Sable left the room smiling.

They need wait only until planting and berry seasons passed. Adoption and marriage feast would be combined. This meant they would be married the latter part of June.

His betrothal gift to Kittihawa was the jacket of white doeskins. The next morning De Sable rode away, promising to return when the second moon waxed full.

Now De Sable wanted land of his own. He made inquiries in nearby Peoria and was directed to Captain Maillet from whom he purchased a plot of land. The transaction is noted in the records of "Old Peoria":

> *One lot of land and a house at the old Peorias Fort, and a tract of land near said Old Peorias Fort, quantity unknown, purchased by Jean Baptiste Point Sable, assignee Jean Baptiste Maillet, by deed.*

With this deed in his pack De Sable rode farther. So it happened that once more in the month of May he came out upon the portage that separated Lake Michigan from the rivers that emptied into the Mississippi.

The plain was all in bloom. De Sable walked among the pink flowers and breathed their faint, aromatic fragrance. He poked through the tangle and long grasses, exploring the land. Hidden by shrubs and wrapped about with clinging vines he found the remains of a decaying log cabin. It had been hastily and crudely constructed by inexperienced hands. Inside he found rusty utensils and moldy pieces of a leather boot. Some white man had occupied the cabin long ago. What had become of him?

De Sable abandoned his first thought of using the cabin. His two Indian boys set up camp and for two weeks they remained on the portage. Scarcely a night passed that they did not have the company of some party—either going to Canada or coming from Canada—heading for the Mississippi Valley. De Sable's ready knowledge of Indian languages served him well.

From this short stay at Eschikagou he brought back several exceptionally fine pelts, together with the conviction that whatever the dangers to be encountered at this place he could do excellent business there.

PART THREE - NEGRO AMERICAN

"You are vast and beautiful, North America.
Your origin is humble like a washerwoman's,
Shaped in the unknown,
It is your piece of honeycomb that is most sweet."

11

Eschikagou

By the spring of 1774 De Sable persuaded the entire Potawatomi village to move to Eschikagou with him. His Peoria farm was doing well. Kittihawa managed the farm with the lively assistance of her kinsfolk. This left De Sable free to hunt, trap and trade.

His trading post at Eschikagou was being talked about. In the summer of '72 De Sable took a band of workers to the portage, cleared a space and put up a large square building. It was not entirely an Indian structure, nor was it French. It combined some of the best features of each. The logs were peeled and set upright in Indian fashion, but instead of simply leaving a slit in the roof for smoke De Sable built in a huge stone fireplace, its chimney going up outside the wall. Windows were cut in the logs, the openings covered with dried sheepskins which admitted light while furnishing protection against wind and rain. The floor was hard-packed clay. He contrived benches and tables from logs for Frenchmen and tossed the skins of wolf and grizzly bear on the floor for Indians. Unusual as these features were, it was what he did after the place was all finished that made the talk.

He painted a sign in French which said, "Come in and build a fire," after which he signed his full name. He fastened the sign over the door where anyone who passed along the route could see it. Then he took wide, smooth strips of bark and he drew pictures which would say even more to the Indians. He told who he was, that he was an ally of the great Pontiac, that he welcomed them to this house. He covered the front of the structure with these pictures. He painted on his walls an eagle, sign of his own clan in the Potawatomi, an elk, his wife's sign, and above them an otter, the sign of Pontiac.

The first traders who crossed the portage after his lodge was completed stared at it in amazement. When they pushed in the door and saw the great heap of firewood piled beside the fireplace they could not believe their eyes. For hardly more than two months in the year was sleeping under the stars on the portage really pleasant. Now suddenly traders and trappers were presented with comfortable shelter all year round. Whenever De Sable was present he acted as host, but most of the time he was off somewhere—either hunting, trapping or fishing, taking goods out for shipment or attending to his farm. During the winter of 1773–74 he remained in the Great Lakes region throughout the hunting season. When he came out, a Canadian trapper named Le Mai was with him and he had the finest lot of pelts he had ever taken. He returned home to find the infant he left was now a year-old toddler who, at the sight of him, ran screaming to his mother! Kittihawa tried to reassure the unhappy father, but De Sable made up his mind right then that he must take his family to Eschikagou.

The village was in a hubbub. The heads of families accepted without question that there was plenty of land, plenty to sustain life and plenty of fur-bearing creatures in the region. But the portage suffered the evil reputation of being a battleground between tribes and De Sable was asked to give some assurances on that score.

"I have made good friends of all the peoples thereabout," he answered. "They are welcomed in my house. We exchange goods and I consult with them. I have told them I would bring all my family and they are glad."

"And what about the British?" asked the heads of families.

"Not once have I seen a redcoat in those parts," declared De Sable.

Never did a man move such a family. The caravan which traveled to Eschikagou moved unmolested across the country. It moved slowly, for there were oxcarts as well as horsemen, cows and pigs and chickens and little children. It was the month of June and camping outdoors was delightful, so the trek was not too difficult.

Kittihawa was expecting her second child soon, so De Sable turned the trading lodge into a home for her and small Jean Baptiste while he built a new house. He chose the site carefully, remembering that the little ones must not be too near the lake. Old documents describe the house he built as "a substantial dwelling faced toward the south, having the river directly in front and the lake a short distance to the east." It stood near the present site of the Wrigley building on the north bank of the Chicago River at Michigan Boulevard.

Before the house was finished two happy events took place. His daughter was born, hers being the first recorded birth in the new settlement. They called her Suzanna. Five days later De Sable heard a loud "Allo!" from the water. There waving from his boat was Otussa!

The young man was tall and stalwart. He had heard much of this undertaking from traders and he had brought them a gift. Kittihawa, a little pale but with her eyes serenely happy, met him at the door while small Jean Baptiste, sucking his fingers, regarded the newcomer solemnly.

"You must see what I bring!" Otussa ran back to his things and returned with his arms full of long, green twigs. "Lombardy poplars from France!"

"Poplars!" exclaimed De Sable. "How beautiful they'll be!" He remembered the tall, slender trees with their shimmering blooms. "I've never seen them in America."

"They'll grow here," Otussa assured them. "You can see them near Montreal where they've been planted." He placed the tender saplings in the woman's hands. She would make them grow.

Early next morning before the sun was up Kittihawa planted the row of poplars which in due time grew tall and shaded the house. Boatmen passing on the river pointed them out and many years later early settlers in Chicago enjoyed their shade.

During the evening meal Otussa slipped into French.

"I am going to school," he said. "I want to learn the French—learn it well. I need your help for something I want to do."

"Anything," responded De Sable.

"Frenchmen write books—many pages all together. I want to write about Pontiac."

De Sable regarded him a moment before speaking, then said slowly:

"That is a good thought. How can I help?"

After that when alone they conversed in French. Otussa told him of the books he had seen in Montreal and for the first time De Sable revealed the fact that he had been in France, and told about the Jesuit school in New Orleans.

"There must be such schools in Canada. Search and you will be well rewarded."

Otussa's visit left De Sable thoughtful. He recalled how in Haiti his mother sent him regularly to the priest for lessons, how his father insisted that he should go to school. He considered his three years at Saint Thomas in France. What he learned there had served him well. It had been years since he held a book in his hands, yet he knew the value of books. He knew that living was far more complex than these Indians who trusted him imagined. A group of boys raced by on their way to the river. They were sturdy, straight and happy. Soon his own son would be running and playing like that. But after that what? Indian children were not dull. They learned from their parents and tribe everything necessary to protect and sustain themselves. Sickness was very rare and Indians lived to be very old. But now that the white man had come, the simplicity of such living on the land was passing. If whites and Indians lived together in America, as hoped by Pontiac, each would take something from the other. The Indians would profit by the white man's learning. De Sable had seen cities. He knew the Indians were not prepared to live in cities. From his seat on the scaffolding of his house he looked out toward Lake Michigan.

Someday, he thought, there might be a city here.

Ships could dock there at the edge of the lake, grain could be loaded on them and sent by way of the St. Lawrence River to crowded cities in Europe! Cattle could be brought in from all the surrounding plains and shipped from here. Such work would bring many people. There would be mills and storehouses, smokehouses and bakeries. There would be noisy, cobbled streets over which a stagecoach would rumble! De Sable laughed aloud at all this imagining.

At the moment Indian women were chopping, digging and preparing fields for seed while their men put up the houses and sheds for livestock. Horses and cows grazed and grunting hogs poked about in the hedges. Yet De Sable knew that he was building a town.

Indians had no sense of land ownership. When a family prepared a field and dropped seed into it, the fruit of the field naturally belonged to that family, but an Indian would as soon think of owning air and sunshine as land. Land was put there by the Great Spirit for his children to use. The Indians, who for generations had been roaming over the portage, regarded these settlers without resentment. They liked the "black white man" who came first and built the lodge. They accepted him as a friend. When they saw he had brought his "family" they dropped by to get acquainted. They laughed and told them about the smell which would eventually drive them away.

But De Sable now knew the source of that smell. It was for this reason that he drove his plow deep across the plains and so buried in the rich black earth the tiny onion bulbs which became so odorous rotting in the sun. Therefore, during the last hot August days the first settlers caught only whiffs of the smell that blew in off the plains. Next spring they would hunt out the plant while it was in bloom. Gradually the pale pink flower disappeared from the area, but where the flowers had been there were fields, orchards and roads.

Meanwhile *voyageurs* came and went. Enterprising dealers, hearing of the new settlement, brought in plows, axes and iron utensils. De Sable ordered a millstone for a horse mill, large saws and additional carts. The traders looked about and were impressed by what they saw. De Sable's house was a comfortable five-room building when completed, with a fireplace of gray field stone in the principal room, and a roofed-over porch running the full length of its front. It was built on a sloping rise of ground close to the river's mouth. In those days the river curved sharply to the south and ran parallel to the lake for a few hundred yards before entering it. The bit of land thus formed afforded shelter from direct onslaught of the waves, so that the sluggish little river, eighteen feet deep and thirty yards wide, had a quiet harbor. A canoe could beach at the foot of his yard, only a stone's throw away. From her door Kittihawa could watch her husband departing for the hunt. Their neighbors paddled by and children dug clams along the shore.

Before winter several large barns and stables—sufficient to house all the livestock—were up. Since there could be no harvest they had brought stores of food from Peoria. Grain was packed under the roof and dried meats hung there. There would be enough for all. When De Sable and the other men went off for the hunting the women and small ones stayed close to their fires. But still there was weaving and sewing and beading to be done—new mats to make and thick coverings for their tiny windows.

Kittihawa was happy in her fine new house. She had never seen so many rooms under one roof. She knew this was a "white man's" house but all that her husband did was right and good in her eyes. When the wild dashing of waves against rocks made her shiver, she was ashamed. Her husband liked to hear the waves. She rocked her baby to sleep singing softly:

"Nothing can harm you, little one. All is well."

12

Prisoner of the British

The seasons piled one on top of the other and all the days seemed to grow shorter. There was not enough time to do all the things that had to be done: draining the marshes, building a landing, putting up the mill, setting out orchards, planting, harvesting, cutting down trees—and more building. The Indians regarded De Sable's ceaseless activity with some bewilderment. Draining, planting, harvesting—such duties fell naturally within the cycle of living, but so much building seemed superfluous. When was the family to enjoy the fruits of its labors? De Sable saw that he was driving his people too hard.

"Should you meet up with men looking for work," he told passing traders, "send them this way. We need help." They agreed to do so.

But it was easier said than done. At this time there was no rush of white men to the Far West. Daniel Boone was in Kentucky and there were small settlements in Ohio but pioneers from the eastern seaboard were slow to venture into such unknown territory. The few workers who reached the portage settlement were Frenchmen from the Mississippi Valley or French Canadians. They liked the place and their relations with the Indians were natural and easy. Le Mai, the trader with whom De Sable had worked, arrived with his Indian wife. They shared De Sable's house until their own was built facing the lake. Another Canadian trader named Ouilmette built farther up the river. Indians on the plains no longer made the long trip down to the Mississippi River to dispose of their furs. They brought them to De Sable's lodge. Indians to the north bypassed the British forts, ignored the British command to turn their pelts in to them, but instead brought the furs to De Sable's lodge. Traders began to say that the best equipped post between Montreal and St. Louis was at Eschikagou.

Then on July 4, 1776, in a distant city called Philadelphia, a body of determined, grim-faced men put their names to a Declaration of Independence and George III ordered his generals to stop dallying and put down a costly rebellion. The generals knew by this time that the colonists meant business. They had already been forced to evacuate Boston. Only by the strongest force did they hold Quebec. Now word reached them that George Rogers Clark, one of the rebel leaders, with an army of fierce Kentuckians and Virginians had moved into Ohio and was winning over the French and Indians. Suddenly all the Great Lakes region became an important arsenal and once more the plains of Illinois resounded to the beating of war drums.

Siggenaak, war chief of the Potawatomi, called the Indians of the region together. Potawatomi, Sac, Fox, Winnebago were to meet him at Fox Lake.

It was with a heavy heart that De Sable prepared to answer the summons. Many made ready with gay anticipation of a pleasant outing. Whole families traveled together.

"Leave the children with Grandmère," De Sable told his wife. He did not want his son present at a war council.

He traveled by horseback with Kitthawa behind him. Early frost had touched the leaves and the woods blazed with bright colors. There was a sparkle in the air. The councils met at night on a green sward beside the clear lake. Great bonfires lighted the sky and the drums were muffled.

Siggenaak was in full war paint as were the other chiefs, Nakewoin and Kissegouit. They sat together, united in splendor as they were in aims. It was Siggenaak who presided. He told them at length about the war which had broken out between the English colonies and their rulers.

"White men continue making war on each other. Now while angry Englishmen kill other Englishmen is the time for Indians to unite and drive them all out!"

De Sable's heart grew sick as he listened.

"If the colonies fight well," continued Siggenaak, "the British will be forced to draw their forces from Mackinac and Detroit, from Ste Clair and De Chartres. Let us be prepared for that time! Let us open these doors to the French who are our allies! Let us drive out all British!"

The Indians shouted agreement. De Sable sat silent, his mouth dry. But when it came his turn to speak he rose slowly to his feet and looked around until all were silent. The crowd recognized him. There was a ripple of sound, then everybody leaned forward awaiting his words. His voice was low.

"Have you forgotten all of Pontiac's imploring? Have you forgotten the long siege which Pontiac himself laid at Detroit? The guns there now are more powerful. They will destroy our people even more easily than at that time. Is this the way? If the white man is destroying himself, why can we not wait? Why must we be embroiled in his affairs? You do not know his thinking. You do not know his schemes. I tell you no good can come to us, O my people, if we take up arms now." He sat down amid dead silence. Kittihawa reached over and took his cold hand.

After a moment Siggenaak stood up. He knew all about Jean Baptiste de Sable but now he was annoyed. This too-recent son of the Potawatomi had exceeded his place. The chief spoke coldly and deliberately.

"Our brother asks why we mix in white man's affairs? Why should we not wait? I will tell you." His voice choked with feeling. "Because whatever side wins those left will turn and destroy us. These whites have said *'we cannot live in this land with them.'* They drive us off and dig up the graves of our fathers. Either we destroy them or they will destroy us!"

A roar came from the crowd—a roar which echoed through the night and was picked up by the drums.

Early the next morning Chief Siggenaak sent for De Sable. He received the trader alone in his tent. De Sable had no idea what he might expect. He waited uneasily for the chief to speak.

"I do not chastise you for your thoughts, my son. You are more faithful to Pontiac's spirit than I who fought beside him." For the moment the chief was silent as if he were thinking over those days. Then he continued, "I do not call the people to avenge our wrongs. I call them for defense—defense of their survival. Do you understand?"

"I hear you, O Chief," responded De Sable.

Siggenaak regarded him for a moment, then spoke briskly:

"I go to Kaskaskia to meet the rebel leader George Clark. I should like for you to go with me. You know the white man, his language and his ways. You can serve our people well at such a conference."

"I am honored, Siggenaak," murmured De Sable through stiff lips.

"Good! We leave directly after sundown."

Seven horsemen made the trip almost without a stop. At certain places they found fresh horses waiting, ate something, perhaps stretched flat on the ground for a short time. Then they were on their way. They avoided all towns or settlements, met no redcoats or unfriendly Indians.

When De Sable caught a glimpse of the Mississippi he drew in his breath sharply. Surely he would get a chance now to cross over and see Jacque Clemorgan! They were a good many miles south of St. Louis but he hoped that after the conference with George Clark he would be free. Kittihawa had gone home to be with her children. She would attend to everything while he was away.

They were met just outside Kaskaskia by a courier with instructions to wait until dark to enter the town and then proceed to the inn where Clark would meet them. Fort de Chartres was only a few miles away and it was well to be careful.

"I'm depending on you to know best how to talk to this man," said Siggenaak as they dismounted in front of the darkened inn.

But when they were gathered in the dimly lighted room De Sable frowned. There was nothing familiar to him about the heavy-set man who sat drumming with thick fingers on the table. He wore a coonskin cap and hunched forward, peering at them. Here, De Sable knew, was a white man whose thinking he could not fathom. Standing behind him were three other men and they, too, seemed strange. If they were soldiers they wore no uniform. Each seemed to be gotten up in a distinctively different style. The Indian with them was a Cherokee. It immediately became evident that he was not familiar with the languages of the Plains or Great Lakes Indians. Siggenaak looked helplessly toward De Sable. The three men behind Clark shifted uneasily. No one had indicated a seat for the chief. De Sable spoke sharply:

"*Personne ici ne parle français?*" His eyes were on the standing men. The youngest glanced in his direction.

"*Oui,*" he said carelessly. His father's plantation spread out on both sides of the James River and the young Virginian had studied in Paris.

"Good," answered De Sable crisply. "If you will tell me what is said I'll interpret for Chief Siggenaak."

"What is it? What's he saying?" asked Clark suspiciously.

"This fellow speaks French," the Virginian told him. "I can repeat what you say in French and he'll tell the Indians in their own language."

"No time for such monkey business," growled a Kentuckian.

"Who is he? How do we know we can trust him?" Clark tried to see him in the flickering candlelight.

"He's a French black—reckon from the West Indies." The young man spoke with assurance. He turned to De Sable and asked in French, "What's your name, boy?"

After a moment's hesitation he answered, "Jean Baptiste de Sable."

"Like I thought," commented the Virginian, "name's French. I reckon he's all right."

So at last the conference got under way. George Rogers Clark looked upon Indians as treacherous savages whose presence in the woods only increased the already heavy difficulties of honest settlers. If this fine, rich land had only been without Indians! But he knew what the Indians had done to General Braddock. The colonies had already appealed to France for help. Now, if only he could enlist the Indians and French in the Mississippi Valley on the side of the colonies, the British would be caught in a tight squeeze. With all the eloquence at his command he therefore told the group crowded into the dimly lit room about the strength and power of the colonies, about their victories. He told them they were driving the British out and that it would be well for the Indians to come over to their side. Several times he referred to the rebelling colonists as "Americans."

De Sable interpreted faithfully and fully. Once he stopped and asked,

"Americans? I do not understand."

"Americans," repeated the Virginian. "We will no longer accept British rule. We are not Englishmen. We were born here—in this new land. I am an American!" He said it proudly.

De Sable's eyes flickered over the Indians but he said nothing. So there was such a word!

Chief Siggenaak was not a young man. His place of high honor with his people made his responsibilities heavy. For many hours he had sat straight in the saddle, riding across country to this conference. Now, unwavering, straight as a ramrod, the chief stood in silent dignity while the white man spoke. After a time the dark, expressionless faces before him checked the flow of Captain Clark's words. He stopped, scowled and looked up at the soldier beside him.

"Do they understand? Ask if they have anything to say?"

After De Sable passed on the question Chief Siggenaak spoke briefly.

"He thanks you," interpreted the Virginian, "and says he will go back and tell his people."

"Talk! Talk!" exploded Captain Clark. "What are they going to do? Are they with us or not? I want to know now."

"If I may make a suggestion, Captain?" The Virginian's voice was soothing.

"Yes—yes, of course." Clark waved his hand impatiently.

"Tell them our new republic acts for them, too. Tell them about Mr. Jefferson's Declaration." The young planter was a great admirer of Thomas Jefferson.

"Declaration?" Captain Clark looked vague. Then, hastily, "Oh, yes—that proclamation. Oh, well, I'm a soldier, not a scribbler. You tell them if you think it'll do any good."

The young man turned back to De Sable.

"Listen carefully, Jean Baptiste. We don't want to fight the Indians. We're inviting them to join with us. We signed a paper —a kind of treaty," he went through the motions of signing, "declaring everybody's got a right to life and liberty. You know what the word 'liberty' means?" De Sable repeated the word slowly, then nodded his head. "Well, that's why we're throwing out the British—so we can have liberty. We're all free men. Tell the Indians that."

For a moment De Sable was silent. Instead of interpreting he leaned eagerly toward the Virginian and asked:

"You mean—everybody—to be free?"

The Virginian stepped back from the dark face. At that moment the door behind them was pushed in and a husky voice whispered:

"The British! They come! Get out—quickly!"

Although the shadowy figure spoke French, after one startled moment everybody in the room understood.

"Run for your lives," the Virginian urged De Sable. "All is lost if the British catch any of you."

They were gone off into the darkness. De Sable and one other stayed close to the chief. The remainder separated, taking different roads. The echo of flying hoofs was swallowed up in the night. As his fleeing mare carried him farther and farther away from the Mississippi River De Sable thought regretfully:

Au revoir again, Jacque! I'll be back this way.

Colonel Arent Schuyler de Peyster, commander of British forces in the Northwest, described De Sable in his memoirs as "a handsome Negro, well educated and settled at Eschikagou, but much in the interest of the French." The date of De Peyster's visit to Eschikagou is uncertain, but in some detail he described the trading post, wharves, barns, mill, smokehouses, surrounding cultivated fields and grazing cattle. He said there was a good-sized Indian village near by.

But when Colonel de Peyster was reliably informed that George Rogers Clark was rounding up forces for an attack on Detroit he sent orders to Lieutenant Thomas Bennett to proceed to Eschikagou, arrest Jean Baptiste de Sable and bring him to Mackinac.

Thomas Bennett, "Lieutenant and Adjutant of ye King's 8th

Regiment" and commander of St. Joseph's, was not happy at receiving the order. The fort of St. Joseph was a couple of miles upstream across Lake Michigan from Eschikagou. The whole area swarmed with Potawatomi and the commander already had his hands full holding them in check. He had made all kinds of overtures to the Indians: supplied them with food and rum, employed them around the fort. And it was true that his soldiers had moved about unmolested. But the last time Lieutenant Bennett had gone out with a detachment, leaving the fort manned by trusted Indians, the place had been overrun by a band of renegades under a French trader named Linctot, allied with Captain Clark, the American. They carried away guns, ammunition and stores of food. Broken casks of rum indicated that the Indians had drunk with them. But when the outraged commander demanded to know why they had not withstood the invasion, the Indians declared themselves helpless before the brutal onslaught! Lieutenant Bennett had been in the region six months and he certainly did not like the idea of arresting Jean Baptiste de Sable.

But a lieutenant must carry out the orders of his superior. So he sent word to get the boats ready and rounded up a dozen men.

Sometime later as he and his soldiers made their way down to the boats, they were approached by a group of Potawatomi, headed by the chief of their nearby village. The chief bowed and respectfully begged permission to address Lieutenant Bennett. When permission was granted, the chief said that the Potawatomi repented the fair promises they had made him, respectfully returned the pipe and belt he had given them and said that they declined to engage in any further warfare. They also informed him that the recently arrived Ottawa sent word that they were determined not to go farther than St. Joseph.

Lieutenant Bennett accepted the pipe and belt with what dignity he could muster. He knew that nothing could be gained by arguing with the chief. He climbed into his boat, reflecting as he did so that the fort would probably be burned to the ground before he returned from Mackinac.

De Sable and his family were sitting down to the evening meal when the soldiers arrived. The waterfront was deserted and the British soldiers no longer wore bright red coats which might have been quickly seen even through the dusk. Their coats were shabby, faded and dirty. If there was any gold braid in the lot it was so tarnished as to be invisible. So they had no warning until they heard the clamping of boots on the porch and looked up to see a British soldier framed in the open doorway.

"Jean Baptiste de Sable, I arrest you in the name of the king!" Lieutenant Bennett's voice rang with all the authority invested in him.

De Sable stood up. He fully comprehended the gesture and tone—if not all the words. The officer now pushed forward an Ottawa lad whom De Sable recognized. The boy spoke without moving a muscle of his face and he kept his voice exceedingly respectful. What he said in Ottawa was:

"Jean Baptiste, these swine come to arrest you. Have no fear. Already I have sent out the word. How I hate them!"

To which De Sable responded also in Ottawa:

"Stop prating like an old woman, little frog. They only do what they are told. But why should the British arrest me?"

"He knows nothing, the young fool!" said the boy.

Lieutenant Bennett thought it time to break up this colloquy.

"Are you coming peaceably?" he asked.

De Sable spoke to the boy: "Invite the officer to sit down and eat with us. Take the others out to my brothers. Tell them to feed and house them. We cannot cross the lake until morning."

"I shall tell them to cut their throats," the boy answered cordially. He said in English to Lieutenant Bennett:

"He happy go wid you see great English father! He say you sit down to eat. He say me tell Indians feed all. He very friendly."

The lieutenant sighed gratefully. What a relief! He smiled gratefully as a tall, good-looking Indian woman set a place for him at the table. He beamed at the two cunning-looking brown children as he sniffed the flavor of a succulent dish placed before him.

De Sable was even more surprised when he learned that he was being taken to the British headquarters at Mackinac.

They did not leave for three days. De Sable put his affairs in shape for a long absence. Kittihawa, his Indian brothers and Le Mai would carry on his business. They would also continue to furnish food to the rapidly increasing bands under George Rogers Clark.

As he stepped into the boat and waved his hand to the throng who came to see him off, De Sable wondered for which of his crimes against the British crown he was being arrested.

They heard the drums sounding inland as they traveled, but De Sable was not prepared for the sight which met his eyes when they crossed Lake Michigan to the Straits of Mackinac where rocky islands lifted themselves out of the water like huge turtles sunning themselves. As they appeared at the entrance one of the canoes darted out from a cove and encircled the three boats. One of the two occupants called out in Ottawa:

"Is it our brother Jean Baptiste?"

The Ottawa boy in Lieutenant Bennett's boat shouted back:

"It is Jean Baptiste who comes!"

At this the little boat flew across the waters—with one of the Indians standing and waving his arms. From every nook and cranny as far as they could see came more canoes!

"What is this?" asked Bennett. His face had turned pale and he reached for his gun.

De Sable shook his head. "No," he said, pointing to the gun. "No gun."

The two other boats crowded close. The soldiers looked toward the lieutenant for orders. The canoes were rapidly surrounding them—and still they came.

"Tell him," De Sable said to the interpreter, "that these are friends coming to meet me. I promise there will be no trouble."

The lad passed on his words but Bennett still held his gun. Seeing this, the other soldiers cocked their guns. De Sable stood up in the boat and lifted his arms. At sight of him a shout went up. It passed over the waters and echoed among the firs and birches. They heard it in the British fort up ahead:

"Jean Baptiste! Jean Baptiste! Jean Baptiste!"

He waited several minutes, standing there straight, hands uplifted. Then he shouted:

"Greetings, my brothers! I greet you in peace. I come in peace to talk with the British. It is a good thing that I come. See! I bring my pipe to smoke with the British!" He lifted his calumet with its bright feathers and beaded ribbons. Those in the canoes nearest him could see that he wore the belt of Pontiac.

The canoes spread out in a fanlike formation behind the boat in which he rode. Amazed British soldiers at the fort ran to Colonel de Peyster with the astounding information:

"Colonel! Some mighty Indian chief is coming. Look, sir! Look and see!"

The colonel came out and looked. He had never seen anything so impressive.

"By gad!" he exclaimed. "There must be thousands of them. They seem to be unarmed. And they couldn't be making an attack in the open daylight—and with so much shouting."

"No, look!" One of the staff pointed. "They're saluting that one standing up. He must be a mighty chief indeed."

"Run quickly," shouted Colonel de Peyster. "Fire the cannon in salute! This looks like a good day for us!"

So the big cannon boomed. For a moment the little boats rocked in alarm. Then the Indians saw the flags being waved from the high walls. They heard the soldiers in the fort cheering. They waved back and shouted—and once more the cannon boomed.

13

A New Republic: The United States of America

In 1779 Spain declared war on Great Britain. The British were not doing well with their war in the eastern sections of North America but now they said they would sweep Spain from the continent. They gathered a force at the mouth of the Wisconsin River for an assault on St. Louis. The town had grown rapidly through the years. Its inhabitants were intent on trade, were easygoing, hard drinkers and careless fighters. St. Louis spread out along the river, open and defenseless.

But when threatened, the people of St. Louis rallied round De Leyba, their governor. The vicious attack failed utterly and the British were driven off. Then, thoroughly aroused, the people of Missouri prepared for attack.

On January 2, 1781, the Spanish expedition set out from St. Louis for St. Joseph, which was located in what is now the southern part of Michigan. There were some Spaniards in it and they carried a Spanish flag, but it was made up mostly of Frenchmen, Indians, half-breeds and men, who like Jacque Clemorgan, called themselves "Americans." Jacque hated all forms of winter activity. His stomach was round and full but he was an official of St. Louis and a man has to defend his home.

So it was that Jacque Clemorgan was in one of the boats that followed the route used by De Sable up the Mississippi River to the Illinois. There they were met by Chiefs Siggenaak and Nakewoin of the Potawatomi and the Fox. By the time they reached Lake Peoria the river was frozen over and it was necessary to leave the boats behind and continue on foot. Severe winter weather slowed them up but in the three weeks of march from Peoria to St. Joseph the army increased in size. The Potawatomi were expecting them and St. Joseph was taken without any fighting. The Spanish expedition then formally turned over fort and town to the Americans. Never again did the British hold this area. The Missourian returned home without losing a man.

"How far is it from here to Chikagou?" Clemorgan asked an Indian.

"It is very cold," the Indian countered.

Clemorgan exposed the gleam of a gold piece in his hand. The Indian considered.

"Not far with good sled," he said.

"Have you a good sled?"

"Maybe." Clemorgan gave him the gold piece and the bargain was made.

The sled was a boxlike affair drawn on runners of buffalo horns. The stout little pony dragged them over the smooth ice around the lower end of Lake Michigan. Thick snow muffled every sound in white magic. It was a cold, crisp day. After the painful march ending with victory for the marchers, Jacque Clemorgan wrapped the warm blankets about him and fairly purred with content.

"Do you know Jean Baptiste de Sable?" he asked his Indian driver.

"Ah—Jean Baptiste!" Then he said, "He is not now there."

"Not there?" exclaimed Clemorgan. "But I'm going to see him. Where is he?"

"A prisoner—the British!"

"Oh, no!"

The bright day seemed to snuff out. The years rolled away. Jacque and Jean Baptiste were together again. What good years they had been! He knew of De Sable's success. Any trader on the Mississippi could tell him. Clemorgan's warehouses extended along two rivers and his boats passed each other in the channel. But Jacque Clemorgan no longer worked with his men. He had a fine house on the bluff and his wife bought her dresses in New Orleans. But as he rounded the lake and saw the portage now blanketed in snow he thought, Jean Baptiste has the better part. For he saw that his friend was really building a city! Then he remembered that Jean Baptiste was a prisoner.

Kittihawa welcomed him cordially. Jean Baptiste had told her of his disappointment in not crossing the Mississippi that time from Kaskaskia. Clemorgan learned for the first time how near Jean Baptiste had been. He looked about the comfortable warm room and relaxed under the administrations of a gracious woman. She cried out in alarm when he removed his boots and she saw his frostbitten feet. Her French was timid and faulty but a dozen times that evening Clemorgan commented to himself on how lucky his friend was.

Kittihawa had received several messages from her husband. Always he seemed cheerful.

"He sent me this," she said and laid in his hand a large cameo brooch. Clemorgan turned it about and knew it had come from Paris, probably by way of Montreal.

"It's lovely," he said handing it back. But not, he thought, so lovely as the little girl peeping shyly from behind her mother's skirts.

"Stay and rest here," she invited. Consequently, he put off his departure. And on the third day, after stamping the snow from his feet and shaking out his fur cap, Jean Baptiste de Sable walked in.

What a reunion! Small Jean Baptiste and Suzanne looked on with widened eyes. Never had they heard so much noise in one house. Their big papa tossed them in the air and the funny man with hair on his face like corn tassels caught them! It was a fine game, but exhausting.

There was no end to the talking. De Sable had a fantastic tale to tell about his imprisonment. He gave a stirring account of his reception. Clemorgan roared with laughter over the colonel's discomfort when he discovered for whom he had fired the salute.

"But after that he couldn't send me to the blockhouse," explained De Sable.

Less than a fortnight later De Peyster was transferred to the command of Detroit to take the place of Colonel Hamilton who had been captured by the Americans. Lieutenant Governor Patrick Sinclair was placed in charge of Fort Mackinac. The lieutenant governor had been living on a large tract of land which he had developed on the St. Clair River, not far from Detroit. He left his establishment in charge of a Frenchman named François Bellecour.

"That François Bellecour was a bad fellow," De Sable continued. "Nobody would work with him. A delegation of Indians came to Mackinac. They asked that he be removed and I sat in his place."

"What!" exclaimed Clemorgan.

De Sable grinned and nodded his head.

"Behold me—supervisor of 'the Pinery'! It is a fine place and the Englishman Sinclair is quite content."

"Does he pay you wages?" asked Clemorgan, his tone hardening.

De Sable laughed. "Always suspicious, eh, Jacque? Well, you see, I am still a prisoner of these British, but I travel where I please. As for wages," he stood up and stretched his long arms above his head, "wait until you see the pelts on my sled! Ah, it is good to be home!"

Kittihawa's shining eyes were all the response he needed. And once more Jacque Clemorgan said, "The lucky devil!"

The visit had to end. One morning Clemorgan joined with a party traveling to the Mississippi. De Sable fitted him out with snowshoes and plenty of warm wrappings. They would rest at Peoria and, if the river was open, proceed the rest of the way by boat. The next day De Sable fastened on his own snowshoes and, after circling the curve of the lake, sped eastward.

From this time on until Great Britain recognized the United States of America, De Sable handled General Sinclair's business affairs. It is evident that under his supervision "the Pinery" flourished. De Sable bought and sold goods, apparently handling all transactions in his own name. A dozen entries in ledgers preserved in Michigan, Wisconsin, Ontario and Illinois bear witness to this.

These years had greatly broadened De Sable's knowledge of people and the world about him. He became increasingly aware of himself.

Heretofore his contacts with whites had been entirely with the French. He had avoided any other. The French had always been an openhearted, intermingling people. Traditionally, Paris quickly took unto herself all who came: Italians, Germans, Poles, Russians, Jews and Negroes quickly and easily became French. Frenchmen often described De Sable as black, but he was a freeman, not a slave, and he was French. Among the Indians, Jean Baptiste was a black Frenchman who was their brother. But those who came to America from England, Germany and Scandinavia did not possess this happy acceptance of people different from themselves. To Englishmen, Jean Baptiste de Sable was a black—innately inferior.

De Sable's first reaction to this attitude was resentment. Later he began to wonder about the reason; then he looked upon the attitude as a challenge. There were no African slaves in the Great Lakes region. Attempts to enslave Indians in what is now

New York and Ohio had failed. There were white indentured servants who had to work off a debt or a conviction for crime. Slavery did exist along the Mississippi, but in Kaskaskia, Cahokia and Peoria there were as many free black workers as white. Occasionally now in his travels De Sable ran across a skilled craftsman who was a Negro. He learned how hard it was for them to find work in the English settlements.

There were exceptions, of course, even among Englishmen. General Sinclair, the Britisher, was one of them. History records that Patrick Sinclair's military career was a stormy one. That may be because he lost a war. But De Sable liked the big, bluff man with the hearty laugh. Sinclair liked books and he spoke French. When he arrived in Mackinac and wagging tongues gleefully told the story of De Sable's welcome, he appreciated the joke, had De Sable brought in and quickly recognized the prisoner's ability and stature. He heard the Indian delegation to the end. When they asked that he appoint De Sable to "the Pinery" he greeted the request with enthusiasm.

"You're too dangerous a man for me to release," Sinclair told De Sable. "You're still my prisoner, but I know I can trust you."

He never regretted this action. Probably it was evident to him that the British had already lost the war.

In the course of transacting business De Sable became acquainted with James Mays, an energetic, blue-eyed young man from Birmingham, England. He had settled in Detroit in 1778 at the age of twenty-two. With De Sable he visited Chikagou and his admiration for what the black man had done knew no bounds.

"What a site!" he exclaimed, looking out across the lake. "If only your river connected with the Mississippi."

"Someday it will," declared De Sable. "We'll dig a ditch and boats will sail from Lake Michigan into the Illinois River and down to the Mississippi."

"What a port it will be!" exclaimed Mays.

They laughed together. Two Americans proud of their country!

De Sable did not leave "the Pinery" until after the harvest was in and stored. His last assignment from Sinclair took him to Quebec. This city on the St. Lawrence River fascinated him. It was early October and the leaves along the bank were just beginning to turn.

De Sable's business took him to the shop of a French merchant who was selling out his goods before returning to Marseille. At the conclusion of their conference Monsieur Duclos asked:

"You are a stranger in Quebec, are you not?"

"Yes, I am," responded De Sable.

"Then, sir, do accompany me home," invited the merchant. "I should like to talk with you at leisure."

Monsieur Duclos was an elderly man. He had brought his young wife and infant son to New France twenty years before with every intention of staying. Now at the age of sixty-five he was going back.

"Why do you go?" asked De Sable.

"Young man, we came to carve out more France. This is no longer France. I do not wish to die on British soil."

The dark man had never been in such a house before or met such a gracious lady as Madame Duclos. The Frenchman saw his visitor's face and smiled his own appreciation. When he rose to leave, the merchant laid his hand on De Sable's arm.

"We're selling or giving away most of our things. Do you see anything you like?"

De Sable was speechless. Monsieur Duclos indicated a painting over the fireplace.

"You were admiring that," he said. "Take it!" He led him from room to room and smiled as the dark man timidly picked out a walnut cabinet with glass doors, table with chairs to match, a pair of candlesticks and some more paintings. The merchant added several other pieces. When De Sable returned the next day to Monsieur Duclos' store to pay for his purchases and arrange for their shipment, the gentleman shook his head.

"Let me invest this much in your Chikagou. Here is my address in Marseille. Write and tell me how your undertaking turns out."

De Sable clasped the merchant's hand and promised. The furniture would be shipped by way of the Great Lakes but he took the paintings and fragile pieces with him. These included dishes and a priceless blue bowl. On reaching Detroit, De Sable asked his friend James Mays to keep the treasures since he was riding cross country on horseback. Mays listed them in his ledger—where the entry can be read today by anyone who takes the trouble to look it up.

Jean Baptiste De Sable returned home to a changing community. War had destroyed eastern trade. Now settlers were pushing into the West. But Great Britain ignored her agreement and was not withdrawing her armies from the region. Canada wished to retain control of her rich fur trade. As American trappers and hunters swarmed into the lake country, trouble was imminent.

De Sable was forty years old when the treaty was signed; his son was a husky boy of ten. In the spring of '86 news reached him that a priest had settled in Peoria. As soon as crops were in De Sable made the trip to call on him.

"We need a school for our children," he said.

Being recently come to Illinois, Father Paul was not prepared for the dark trader's vehemence. He hoped to start a small school in Peoria, but had no idea how he could extend his parish to Lake Michigan. While he pondered, he questioned the anxious father.

"How many children did you say you have, my son?"

"Two, Father Paul." De Sable smiled and added, "But we are expecting another baby this winter."

"God blesses your good wife," murmured the priest. "When and where were you married?"

"Not far from here, in the old Indian village on the Vermilion River."

"Indeed," said Father Paul. "I had no idea there were any priests in Illinois at that time. Who married you?" The question was innocent enough but with the priest's bright eyes on his face De Sable felt misgivings. He hesitated.

"Why—why—" He shook his head. "There was no priest anywhere, Father. We married with the Indian ceremony. I belong to the Potawatomi tribe."

"But you have been baptized into the church." De Sable nodded his head. "Your Indian ceremony was not a sacrament, my son."

"Father!" The man was deeply distressed. "I'm sure God blessed our marriage. It is a good marriage!"

Father Paul smiled. "I do not judge you, my son. God sees the heart. As your priest, however, I must command you to be married according to the law of God."

"Would you marry us?" asked De Sable, smiling now.

"Of course. Bring the mother of your children here and I shall be happy to bless your bond."

De Sable hurried away. He was not sure how he would explain this to Kittihawa but he knew she would do as he thought best.

But late in August disaster threatened to wipe out Chikagou. Forest fires swept from the plains, across dried lowlands and into their fields. It seized upon the Indian village, licked at barns, stables and sheds, wiped around the granaries; sparks rained down on Le Mai's house and Ouilmette's house was given up for lost. Men, women and children worked frantically. Kittihawa raced from one side of her yard to the other, now tossing water on smoking embers that fell on the veranda and now protecting the precious poplars. When the flames were extinguished the people surveyed the smoking ruins. The post and De Sable's house were saved, but the granaries were gone; Le Mai's house was badly damaged and Ouilmette's gone. The fields were black; many sheds and workshops were destroyed. The following morning Kittihawa could not rise from her couch. She did not moan or groan but De Sable saw that she was very sick. He rushed out for help. When night came they knew they would not celebrate the birth of another child.

Such a loss is perhaps the hardest an Indian woman is called upon to bear. It was months before Kittihawa regained her strength. De Sable looked at her pinched face and his heart bled. He believed God had punished him for neglect.

In September, 1788, accompanied by their son and daughter, De Sable and his wife journeyed to Peoria. Upon arrival they learned that Father Paul had moved to Cahokia. But now De Sable was determined that their marriage by a priest should not be put off. He engaged a lad named Jean Baptiste Pelletier to go along to help man the boat and they traveled down the Illinois River into the Mississippi. Thirteen-year-old Suzanne was aglow with excitement. Young Pelletier could scarcely take his eyes off her.

When they reached Cahokia that town was in a great stir. Federal officials had just arrived to see that the first national law passed by the new Congress of the United States was enforced. De Sable thus heard for the first time the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance which abolished slavery in Illinois! He was overjoyed. Men were arguing the right of Congress to do this thing but De Sable went about the streets hailing Negroes whose faces beamed with happiness. They were free!

He accepted this as a good omen. On October 27th the middle-aged couple faced the priest and were married while their son and daughter looked on with keen interest. There was no music or dancing or feasting as at their first marriage, though somewhere near by black folk did sing. When the priest joined their hands and pronounced them "man and wife" De Sable smiled into the soft brown eyes and knew they had grown more beautiful with the years. Father Paul had trouble pronouncing "Kittihawa." He called the bride "Catherine" and it was thus he wrote her name on the marriage record.

De Sable was sorry to hear from the traders that Jacque Clemorgan had two days before gone up the river on a hunting trip. He did not therefore cross the river to St. Louis. But when they started for home young Jean Baptiste de Sable was not with his family. He remained behind with the priest for "schooling."

And before leaving, De Sable wrote one of the few letters of his life. He left it with Father Paul for delivery. It was very short:

"Jacque, come now to my city. We'll never have slaves in Chikagou."

14

Heartbreak

By the time one complete cycle of seasons went around, all traces of the fire had disappeared. Larger granaries were built; the new bakery had an oven brought from New Orleans; Ouilmette put up a better house near the mouth of the river. A trader from Canada named William Burnett, who crossed the portage more and more frequently, said he'd like to put up a shack in which to store his pelts. De Sable helped him choose the site and his brother Indians helped the Englishman build it. The harvests for two years following the fire were particularly abundant. It was as if Nature assisted in the job of repair.

But unhappy rumors were in the air. Indians from all the surrounding countryside came to De Sable with questions.

They arrived at night and sat cross legged on the floor before the hearth. What was it, they asked, made the white man cut the land into little pieces, put up fences and say, "This is mine. Keep out!" Did not the Great Spirit give the land to everybody? What would happen to the hunting? Game would go away. Famine would come. Only the white man with the square of land inside the fence would have anything to eat.

De Sable heard these questions and frowned. How could he explain to them?

"Did you sell your land to the white man?" he asked.

"Sell? What is sell?" The Indians took their pipes from their mouths and waited.

"Your mark on the paper." De Sable illustrated with his hand.

"See! Did you sign a treaty with the white man giving him your land?"

The old Indians could not understand but young braves pounded the floor in anger.

"Marks! Papers! Always when white man comes he has firewater. He pours his firewater from big cask. Then he says, 'Put mark here!' He holds out papers. What are the papers? What do they mean? Does anybody know what the marks mean when firewater has been drunk?"

The white men continued to come and fence in land. The Indians resisted. In July, 1790, St. Clair, governor of the Northwest Territory, sent soldiers against the Miami. This was a large tribe that spread over Michigan and Indiana. At the approach of the soldiers the Indians fled. In triumph the army encamped on a branch of the Wabash River and the soldiers wandered unmolested about the countryside.

That summer De Sable urged the Potawatomi in the vicinity of St. Joseph to move to Chikagou.

"Here is plenty of room. Our crops flourish. There is more than enough for all."

Large numbers of Potawatomi responded. By this time De Sable ranked high in their council. He was indeed chief of the village on the portage. But there were braves among the Potawatomi who set out to join Siggenaak, the war chief. They knew De Sable was not preparing for war.

In November the Miami, under their famous war chief Little Turtle, attacked. They fell on the unprepared army on the Wabash and demolished it. The Indians slashed and killed; the white men, crazed with fear, threw away weapons as they fled.

When De Sable heard he turned his face to the wall and wept. Later he called his people together in council.

"The Miami have not done a good thing for the people." He used the word Indians used to describe all Indians. "Americans are not like the British. They wish to live with us—here on the land. After this—they will fear and distrust all of us."

De Sable's red brothers listened but made no response. And some of their faces were sullen.

Yet Chikagou was not a gloomy place. There was coming and going, grinding of corn and baking of bread. Cocks greeted the day with lusty crowing and white sails came over the horizon. Then there arrived an enterprising young man from Peoria who told De Sable he would like to work out of this post. It was Jean Baptiste Pelletier. De Sable welcomed the lad, now become a young man. He missed his son and this Jean Baptiste quickly and efficiently slipped into place. De Sable was grateful for the way he assumed responsibilities.

"He has a good head on him," De Sable told Kittihawa. "I'm glad he came."

Kittihawa smiled as women of all times have smiled at dumb males.

"So, I imagine, is Suzanne." She said it calmly.

"What?" asked the father.

"They walk together on the beach—in the moonlight," Kittihawa told him.

"That baby!" exclaimed De Sable angrily. "You should keep Suzanne in the house with you."

Kittihawa patted his arm affectionately. "You should look at your daughter sometimes, my man. She is a woman."

De Sable flung himself down the steps. Suzanne came toward him, a basket of fruit in her arms. The father stared as if he were seeing a ghost. Was that lovely creature his daughter? She smiled at him and crossed the yard to the kitchen. He hurried to the post. The scowl with which he greeted the young man, industriously sorting pelts spread out on the wide table, was terrifying.

But the father's harshness did not succeed in driving young Pelletier away. And after the harvest was gathered in 1792 a marriage feast was given in Chikagou. Pretty Suzanne De Sable became the wife of Jean Baptiste Pelletier. Father Paul traveled from Cahokia to perform the ceremony. De Sable sent boat and escort for him. And with him came tall, young Jean Baptiste de Sable, Jr. Father and son now conversed easily in French. With shining eyes De Sable watched his son write his name.

It was a joyous feast. Indians, Frenchmen and Englishmen came from miles around. There was singing and dancing and much food.

Afterward Pelletier took his bride to the new house he had built in a sheltered nook near the lake.

Meanwhile the Congress of the new United States, having settled on a Constitution, was struggling with the problem of what to do with the magnificent "uninhabited" wilderness of the great Northwest. This was an extremely difficult problem. Should the land be sold or given away? What should be the price—and how might it be paid?

In time Congress passed an act providing (1) for a rectangular land survey by the government, and (2) for the establishment of land offices for the sale of public lands at low prices.

Surveyors worked their way over Ohio and Kentucky to Michigan, approaching Illinois and Indiana. Bewildered Indians traveling westward told De Sable of what was going on. Desperate, he went to Detroit and sought James Mays. Together they went to the land commissioner's office.

"Look!" shouted Mays, when the commissioner either could not or would not understand what De Sable was saying. "The Indians have *some* rights! You can't sell the land right from under them!"

Surveyors did not reach Chikagou that year. Increased numbers of Indians and whites settled on the portage. Trade between Canada and Louisiana was growing heavier each month and De Sable was very busy.

In August, 1795, General Anthony Wayne, commander of the American Army of the Northwest Territory, summoned all the Indians of the region to his headquarters at Greenville, Ohio. Miami, Shawnee, Chippewa, Sac, Fox, Delaware, and Potawatomi responded. On the first day of August De Sable, with other elders from his village, set out from Chikagou. He welcomed this opportunity to talk with the Americans.

Arriving in Greenville the many chiefs and their elders were fed generously. Great casks of rum were rolled out and they were told to help themselves. Then they were crowded into the big log cabin and stood facing a long table behind which sat several men in uniform. The officer in charge was a young man. He spoke through an interpreter and De Sable was much impressed by the nobility of his words.

The good White Fathers in Philadelphia, said the officer, desired to provide well for all the people. They recognized their red children as well as their white children. Now, for the convenience of intercourse, they asked their good Indians to cede to the United States the sixteen posts forming a chain from Detroit to the mouth of the Illinois River by way of the Great Lakes. This would mean peace and happiness for everybody and no more wars.

De Sable nodded his head eagerly. At last there was agreement! And so the Potawatomi signed the paper and they were given a beautiful, clean, red and white flag with white stars on blue in one corner.

"You may hang this fine flag on a pole over your post," the American officer told them. And the Indians thanked him.

Not until many months later did De Sable learn that on that August day in Greenville the Indians ceded to the United States government the land "six miles square at the mouth of the Chikagou River, emptying into the southwest end of Lake Michigan."

Suzanne's daughter was born during the blizzard of 1798. That's the way her birth was fixed in their minds. De Sable was left alone in his house while the wind howled in off the lake and snow whirled through the night. For three days now it had been piling and drifting. But he knew all his people were snug and warm and he was not disturbed.

He thought about the agonizing miracle being performed on this stormy night.

"I'll be a *grandfather*," he said aloud and stretched his arms high above his head. He caught a reflection of himself in the long mirror hanging on the wall. Hum! He didn't look old! Going closer to the mirror he examined what he could see by the light of the bright fire dancing on the hearth.

His face was unlined and his eyes stared back bright and clear. But there were strands of gray in his thinning hair. He thought the peppered beard distinctive. He nodded to himself, grinning. He really was not a bad-looking fellow for all his fifty-five years!

A gust of wind shook the shutters, so he did not at once hear the pounding on his door. When he did, and opened it carefully, the gale seemed to blow snow-covered Indians into the room. They were carrying a man and a woman who seemed already dead.

"Found them in the snow," the Indians explained as they stretched them in front of the fire. "Don't know where they came from." Searchers were scouring the area since it seemed unlikely that the elderly couple would be alone. They had just begun to stir; the man opened his eyes blankly when the door burst open again and Indians half dragged, half pushed a boy and a girl into the room. They were far from unconscious. At sight of the two figures on the floor they rushed forward.

"Mammy!" the girl's voice was hoarse and choked. She flung herself on the floor and began rubbing her mother's face and hands. The boy knelt beside his father. Then he looked up at the surrounding group.

"You save our lives," he said in Cherokee. "You are friends!"

"Yes," answered De Sable quickly. "Dry yourselves by the fire!" He did not know this language very well.

"*Ah! Merci! Merci!*" Now the boy spoke French.

They were in a big wagon buried in the snow. Said their father and mother had gone to look for help, the Indians told De Sable.

"They'll be all right now. Go to your houses and keep warm. You have done a good deed this night." De Sable sent them home.

The man sat up. His were the piercing black eyes of the woodsman. Icicles dripped from his shaggy beard and when he unfastened the tight coonskin cap long gray hair tumbled about his deeply lined, leathery face.

"My name is Daniel Boone, sir." His voice had the quality of a man used to long silences. His manner had the graciousness of one whose home is the great outdoors. He spoke in English. "This is my wife Rebecca and these are the youngest of our five children."

"I welcome you, mister." De Sable stumbled through the English words. He understood from his gestures what the man had said. Somewhere he had heard the name Daniel Boone.

So Daniel Boone, on his way to Missouri, stopped a while at Chikagou. He and his family were guests in De Sable's house until the winter broke. They drank a toast to Jean Baptiste de Sable's granddaughter, tiny Elulela, which means "snowflake" in Potawatomi.

In a short time language was no barrier between the two men. Both spoke several Indian tongues and Daniel Boone knew some French. They had much in common and in no time at all were friends sharing experiences.

Daniel Boone said he was leaving Kentucky forever.

"But why?" asked De Sable after he learned that this was the man of whom he had heard Indians and *voyageurs* from the Ohio Valley speak so often.

Boone shook his head. "Everything's changing. Reckon I'm old and can't keep up. Yet," his eyes twinkled, "I can handle my gun, or sling, or arrow as well as ever. But—I don't know." His face grew sad. "I've lost everything. My lands, my house. They threaten to put me in jail for debt."

De Sable could not believe his ears. "But I thought—" He stopped.

The old man chuckled. "You thought like everybody else—that Daniel Boone had Kentucky in his pocket." He went through the motions of twisting his head and looking down into his pocket. "Well, it ain't there."

"Stay on here in Chikagou," De Sable urged.

Daniel Boone shook his head. "Can't tell what'll happen here." Then asked, "Surveyors been here yet?"

"Not yet." Then De Sable told him about the treaty they signed at Greenville.

"Did you read it?" asked Boone.

"Why, no," answered De Sable. "They told us what it was."

"Should of read it," commented the old man.

He went on to say that his oldest son Daniel Morgan was doing well in Missouri and wrote that the Spaniards would give his father some kind of commission.

"Said they wanted to honor the old man," Daniel Boone chuckled.

On a bright April day, behind a fresh team of oxen, Daniel Boone and his family rolled away. De Sable and his wife hated to see them go. For a long time after the covered wagon rolled out of sight, the dark man sat silent on his porch.

But there was little time for thinking in the busy post. Spring days always tumbled over each other. His work was never done. He adored his little granddaughter and when she fell ill in dry, scorching July De Sable promised God that if He raised up the child he would have her baptized. The baby recovered and when the harvest was in De Sable, his wife, daughter and granddaughter set out for St Louis. Jean Baptiste Pelletier remained at home since Jean Baptiste, the son, was in Canada. This time De Sable sent Jacque Clemorgan word that he was coming.

On October 7, 1799, Suzanne De Sable Pelletier's daughter was baptized by Father Lusson in the church at St. Louis. The child's name was written on the records—"Eulalia." The christening dinner was at Jacque Clemorgan's fine house on the bluff. Whatever Jacque Clemorgan's wife thought of her husband's dark, backwoods friends she said nothing and was gracious. De Sable, however, felt constrained. He was grateful to Jacque, but they did not linger long after the dinner.

St. Louis was an entirely different place than when he last saw it. But thirty years is a long time. He tried to imagine how Chikagou would look in thirty years. At Pontiac's grave, where he stood for a time with uncovered head, he murmured, "*I have found a place, my father.*"

Thus it happened that De Sable was not at Chikagou when the government surveyors came. He returned home three days before the arrival of the land commissioner. The surveyors seemed to have stirred up some trouble.

"They tramped over our fields, took fruit and demanded gifts from our people," complained Pelletier bitterly.

"You should have treated them as guests," said De Sable mildly. He made light of the grumbling he overheard and said everything would be well.

He was at home the morning a boy came running from the post saying he was wanted. As a rule he would have taken his time about answering such a summons, but there was something about the boy's urgency that rather alarmed him.

He found young Pelletier standing behind a table, eyes blazing out of a white face. Two strange white men were poking about, one with a notebook in his hand. A third white man stood idle. De Sable recognized him as a trader named John Kenzie.

"What do you want?" De Sable's tone was sharp. He didn't like the looks of things.

The fleshy man spit a stream of tobacco juice on the floor. Young Pelletier quivered with rage.

"Eh? You De Sable?"

"I am."

"Well, we're the land commissioners."

"Indeed." De Sable waited for more enlightenment. It came.

"We're here to get things set up. You know, settle claims and open up new land."

"This is *my* store," said De Sable pointedly.

"I know. I've heard about you."

"Quite a stock you got here," put in the second man, speaking for the first time.

"Oh, well," said the first, "you don't have to move off right away. Plenty of time. Maybe you'd like to buy the place?"

"Yes. Any land you've built up and are using, the government will sell you cheap. You built a house here, too, didn't you?"

"That's his house," John Kenzie broke in. He pointed through the window. "Finest house on the lake."

"My surveyors told me about this place. Said it had everything. You want to sell the stuff or buy the land? Take your choice." The commissioner waved his hand generously.

De Sable drew in his breath slowly. "I don't understand what you are talking about," he said.

The land commissioner looked hurt. "Look, De Sable, I know my French is bad. But I am telling you as plain as I can. You know as well as I do this land belongs to the government. We're trying to handle this so it will be fair to everybody. You got plenty of time. We got to clean out those Indians first. By then you will decide what you want to do."

"Clean out the Indians?" De Sable's voice was a muffled shriek.

The commissioner looked at him in surprise.

"Of course. This here's an important place. I hear talk of deepening the river and building a canal. We can't have those Indians around. We're moving them west."

"But this is their home. These are their fields and orchards." De Sable spoke through tight lips.

"Say, I thought the fields and orchards were yours." He eyed the dark man suspiciously.

"I share them with the Indians." De Sable wanted desperately for him to understand.

"Oh," said the man, "don't worry about those heathens. They live on roots and fish. And there's plenty of both where they're going." He laughed.

De Sable knew that Jean Baptiste stood behind him rigid and silent. He groaned.

"Now, like I tell you. You and your family can stay here. We're here now to get the Indians out." The commissioner turned away to look at a beaver pelt John Kenzie had picked up.

"*They are my family!*" But the land commissioner did not hear his words. De Sable leaned heavily against the table. He wanted not to believe what the man was saying. But he knew in his heart this was the way it would be. He recalled what Daniel Boone had said. He looked into young Pelletier's white face and he was dumb.

Then he slowly moved to the door, opened it and went out. He did not bother to close the door after him. Looking out, Pelletier saw his father-in-law stagger a little. He walked like a very old man.

15

Sunset in the West

San Carlos del Misouri spread out over the red bluffs along the river. Its three score or more houses, screened by huge shade trees, were surrounded by gardens where every variety of flower bloomed. The broad, fertile stretch of lowlands south of the bluffs was a common field divided proportionally among the town's inhabitants. There was never any quarreling over crops. Everybody worked at some time in the big field and the richness of the soil guaranteed abundant harvest. To San Carlos had come those settlers anxious to get away from the dirt and noise of the bustling trading mart. A Pawnee Indian village was not far away and St. Louis was twenty miles down the Missouri River.

It was always fishing time in San Carlos. On this lazy afternoon in late September, 1810, several canoes rocked gently on the water, while boys supposed to be working in the field were tossing lines from hidden nooks along the banks.

Two fishermen in a long white birch canoe paddled leisurely toward the shaded bank. They had their catch.

"There's Daniel Boone," observed an idler leaning against a tree. There was no envy in his tone when he added, "That old man always gets the best bites. Wonder who be his pal?"

It was Jean Baptiste de Sable, sparse beard white against his dark face, thinning hair peppered with gray. His face was haggard and pain lay deep in his dark eyes. But there was nothing flabby about the grim set of his jaw.

Daniel Boone's long white hair was tied back from his bony face. There was no roundness in his body and the eyes set deep under overhanging brows were bright and piercing.

De Sable had arrived in San Carlos only two days before. Now he rested his paddle and resumed the narrative cut off while the fish were biting.

"I made a list of everything I could sell, after laying aside a few things for my children. The rest they said went with the land." Daniel Boone did not interrupt his thoughtful silence. "I sold to my friend Jean Lalime, not to John Kenzie who made the first offer. I hoped then that someday the Indians might return. If that happens I know Jean Lalime will receive them kindly. The government made it possible for him to pay me in coin—*six thousand livres de vingt coppers.*"

"That is much money," said Daniel Boone.

De Sable sighed. "There was much to do. But I have put my Peoria lands in good shape. Jean Baptiste will see that our people have full use of them. Now that my old woman is gone I want little for myself."

The other nodded his head sympathetically.

The canoe drifted downstream while they talked—two old men in a canoe. One was white and one was black, though sun and wind and much living had blurred this distinction.

De Sable told how he would not give up his property without a struggle. He and James Mays went to Fort Greenville and tried to see General Wayne.

"Where are you sending the Potawatomi?" they asked every official they were able to see.

"To the public domains," was all they could learn.

On the blustering day in early December De Sable returned to find that all the Indians had been driven off and their houses torn down. Kittihawa had tried to keep a younger sister and brother in the house with her but they, too, were gone. For the first time De Sable heard his Indian wife weep and the agonizing sound tore his heart. He rode out on horseback and in time located the miserable group shivering in tents and hastily constructed reed huts in the frozen marshes northwest of the Illinois River. He quickly rounded them up and led a march to his farm in Peoria. There small children and the very old were easily housed while cabins and shacks were built. The shocked villagers brought grain and meat. Finally De Sable was able to return to Kittihawa and tell her that for the winter at least her people were not homeless.

He traveled over the ice and snow to Canada where a retired British general made him an offer.

"Come to 'the Pinery' and be its manager," urged Patrick Sinclair. "You'll see we aren't so terrible after all. At least we're not moving Indians off their lands."

But De Sable shook his head. "It is all a mistake. I must not run away. I must get help."

By spring his lands were so overrun with surveyors and government agents that little planting was done.

"Well, De Sable," they continued to ask, "going to pay the government for this land, or do you sell?"

"What can you do, Jean Baptiste?" asked the French in the region.

"Take over my place," De Sable urged a young French trader in St. Joseph.

"I have land here," objected Lalime.

But finally Jean Lalime agreed. Then De Sable told the government agents:

"I'm selling out."

He tried not to feel anything after that, tried not to see Kittihawa's face or the faces of his children. He told himself, "I am a coward," and took his gun and wandered off into the swamps as far as he could go.

What was there to say?

Some of the things they gave away—a painting to Le Mai, a fine dish from those treasures given him by the merchant in

Quebec to Ouilmette. The lovely blue bowl and some of the paintings Kittihawa packed with the few pieces they were taking with them.

In the fall of 1800 they moved back to Peoria.

Several full cycles of seasons passed during which there was planting and harvest. De Sable was still hale and hearty, his son and son-in-law were willing. But there was sadness in the faces all about him.

Then in 1804 it seemed that disasters were to be repeated. Surveyors and agents appeared saying that the Indians would have to move. That spring a welcomed visitor appeared.

The wealthy Jacque Clemorgan had gone to the new capital on the Potomac River for consultation with federal land authorities there. Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase had brought Missouri into the United States. The vast holdings of Missourians were threatened by the government ordinances. As a high official under the former regime, Clemorgan was empowered to speak for landowners west of the Mississippi. He brought good news to Peoria.

"All you have to do is prove you were settled on this land on or before the year 1783. Heads of families who made improvements on land by that time are entitled to receive four hundred acres of land. Believe me, Jean Baptiste, I am relieved. Just spread this among your neighbors and they will bless you!"

He was right. The French who had settled around Lake Peoria had all been threatened by eviction. Now they gathered at De Sable's house where they regarded the splendid Jacque Clemorgan and added their name or mark—depending on whether they could or could not write—to a statement he prepared for them.

"I'll send this to Washington City along with mine," Clemorgan told them. "Rest easy, my friends, you can keep your land."

So it seemed for a while. But in 1806 the land commissioner at Kaskaskia informed the people of Peoria that their petition had been denied. The necessary proofs of the claimants had not been established. More questions were asked and finally a lawyer, Nicholas Jarrot of Cahokia, had twenty-five names—among them Jean Baptiste de Sable and Jean Baptiste Pelletier. These names were sent to Congress which in March, 1808, granted the petition.

Meanwhile Indians throughout the land were growing more and more restless. In the summer of 1807 De Sable attended a council called at Springfield, Ohio. Here for the first time he saw Tecumseh, the Shawnee Indian chief. And here Tecumseh formed an Indian league and declared:

"These lands are ours; no one has a right to remove us, because we were the first owners; the Great Spirit above has appointed the place for us on which to light our fires; and here we will remain."

When De Sable returned to his home in Peoria he knew that Tecumseh meant war—war to the death.

"What could I do?" the dark man now asked Daniel Boone three years later.

"There was nothing you could do, my friend," answered Daniel Boone. "Nothing."

"It killed my wife," continued De Sable. "When I spoke of moving again she said no—let her rest in peace beside the graves of her ancestors. She lies in an old burial ground on a cliff overlooking the river."

"She has peace. We are old men, Jean Baptiste, and we have done our best. Now," Boone said briskly, "let's get this fish up to the house where our womenfolks can cook it. That granddaughter of yours is a fine girl."

Only the granddaughter accompanied him to Missouri. Suzanne, her husband and Jean Baptiste, the son, stayed with the Potawatomi Indians in Illinois. To them he had left his Peoria property. After Kittihawa was dead he said he had to go away.

It was Jacque Clemorgan who suggested the little hamlet of San Carlos.

"That's where Daniel Boone lives now," he had said.

De Sable bought a piece of land and once more planted a garden. He hunted and fished with Daniel Boone and the two men talked and relived memories. People pointed them out.

"There they go—those two—hunting, trapping and fishing in all kinds of weather."

Jean Baptiste, the son, came for a visit. He looked over the house, did some repairing and loosened the earth around the fruit trees.

"Take care of him, little Lalie," he told his niece. "I must go back."

Jean Baptiste, the son, was killed beside Tecumseh at Tippecanoe.

In June, 1813, Eulalia married Michel De Roi and her grandfather deeded her "two parcels of land, together with half of his swine and poultry." He was to have the use of one of the houses for life; she was "to maintain the property, care for him in sickness, attend his laundry, furnish him wood for heating purposes and furnish maize for chickens and porkers."

His little house was near the churchyard. On hot days he would slip inside the church and rest in its dim coolness. The priest was his friend as were the children who gathered round him in the yard while he told them stories. After a time a small great-grandson leaned against his knee.

His hair turned white as snow and his eyes grew serene. He often talked of Kittihawa as if she were in the next garden.

"Ah, you should see my Kittihawa in her doeskin jacket!" Looking at his granddaughter the old man would shake his head mischievously. "You have nothing so beautiful!"

On the afternoon of August 29, 1818, they missed him from the garden.

"I must run over and see about Grandpa," Eulalia said to her husband.

She found him sitting before an east window. His eyes were closed and across his lap lay Pontiac's belt. She thought him asleep but as she shook him gently the gleaming red and black wampum slipped with a rustling sigh to the floor.

They buried him in the graveyard of St. Charles Borromeo Church. The priest consigned him to the earth from which he had come, while below the cliff the Missouri River flowed down to the Mississippi and on out to the sea.

Chronology

JEAN BAPTISTE POINTE DE SABLE

1745(?)	Exact date uncertain. Born in St. Marc, Haiti.
1764–5	Sails to North America—landing in Louisiana.
1767–9	Fur trading on the Mississippi River with trading post near St. Louis, Mo.
1769	Travels to Canada by water route crossing portion of land between Illinois River and Lake Michigan. Portage called by Indians Eschikagou.
1771	Buys farm and settles with Indian wife near Lake Peoria.
1772	Builds trading hut on Eschikagou.
1774	Moves family and Indian village to Eschikagou (Chicago).
1775	Birth of daughter, Suzanne.
1778	Arrested by British and taken prisoner to Fort Mackinac.
1788	October 27th: Married by priest in Cahokia, Illinois, to Indian wife, the mother of his two children.
1792	Daughter, Suzanne, married to Jean Baptiste Pelletier, at Chicago.
1799	October 7th: Granddaughter, Eulalia Pelletier baptized by Father Lusson at St. Louis, Mo.
1800	Sells property to Jean Lalime. Returns to Peoria farm.
1809	After death of wife leaves Peoria property to son and Potawatomi kin.
1810	Buys property in St. Charles, Mo.
1813	Deeds house and lot to granddaughter when she marries Michel De Roi.
1818	August 29th: Dies and is buried in St. Charles, Mo.

Notes on Sources

On January 19, 1904, David McCulloch read a paper entitled *Early Days of Peoria and Chicago* before a quarterly meeting of the Chicago Historical Society. I quote from this paper:

> *A few years after the close of the Revolutionary War by several resolutions and acts of Congress, each person who had professed himself a citizen of the United States on or before the year 1783, and had made improvements upon the lands, or had been the head of a family at that time, should receive four hundred acres of land. A commission was appointed to receive proof of such claims, who under various names continued to act in that capacity until the year 1815. Among many others there was one who, by the name of Pointsable, Point au Sable, or Point de Sable, made proof that both before and after the year 1783, he had resided at Peoria, that he was the head of a family and that he had improved a small farm of about thirty acres situated between the old Fort and Village and La Ville de Maillet as early as the year 1780. He was therefore reported as being entitled to two tracts of four hundred acres each. He must also have proved his citizenship, else he could not have claimed the land. The printed report fails to show the number of persons constituting his family. This man was afterwards found at Chicago, where he has attained to some celebrity as its first European inhabitant. He must have been a man of some versatility of character, for being of the African race, he could easily adapt himself to his present environments. Being a native of San Domingo, he was by nationality a Spaniard; as an*

> *inhabitant of a French village, he had adopted a French name and possibly passed as a French Negro; when occasion presented itself he became an American citizen, and, if reports be true would, if he could, have become a Potawatomi Chief.*

This presentation of Chicago's first citizen was a combination of legend and fact which persisted until the eminent historian, Milo M. Quaife, Director of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit, made public the results of research made throughout the northwest region and Mississippi Valley. He reported finding De Sable's name not only in ledgers and archives of Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and Missouri, but also in Ottawa, Canada. In his book *Checagou*, 1933, this scholar gives De Sable genuine historical status. He traces De Sable to Canada and rejected the legend that the pioneer had come from the Caribbean.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Milo M. Quaife for the great service he has rendered in thus saving Jean Baptiste de Sable from obscurity. His works opened up avenues for unexplored research. Professor Quaife was uncertain as to De Sable's parentage. He believed that he was descended from a fine old French family settled in Canada. It was probable, he thought, that De Sable was a mulatto.

The word Negro, however, occurs over and over in all early references to De Sable. And in the 18th and 19th centuries "Negro" designated black or dark. There were indeed very few, if any, African slaves in the Great Lakes region of New France in the 18th century. Also I believed there was reason for every legendary story having mentioned Santo Domingo or Saint Domingue in connection with De Sable. Let me explain here that "Santo Domingo" was and is Spanish West Indies while "Saint Domingue" or "San Domingo" was French and is now known as Haiti.

In February, 1951, Dr. Mercer Cook, of Howard University, a student of Haitian history, made public a pamphlet *Haiti et Chicago*, by Joseph Jeremie in which that distinguished Haitian nonagenarian declared himself a descendant of the family of Jean Baptiste de Sable. M. Jeremie drew on family recollections and inscriptions on tombstones to support his thesis. He stated categorically that his illustrious kinsman was born in Saint-Marc, Haiti, the son of a free colored woman, that he studied in France and returned to deal in coffee, wood and dye. He says he left what was then called St. Domingue for Louisiana in search of new markets. M. Jeremie also explained the various different spellings of the name.

I wish to acknowledge my debt to Ernest E. East, State Archival Assistant of the Illinois State Library whose articles in the *Peoria Journal*, June 14 and August 5, 1934 furnished documented facts concerning De Sable's land ownership in Peoria and his death and burial. The secret of De Sable's death was unlocked by the Rev. William B. Sommerhauser, rector of St. Charles Borromeo Church, St. Charles, Mo. In the parish archives De Sable's granddaughter's name is set down as Eulalie Barada; her husband is given as Michel De Roi.

When the Revolutionary War was over Colonel Arent de Peyster, British officer who was something of a rhymster as well as a soldier, published among his "Miscellanies" a rhyming speech which he said he made to "Western Indians assembled at l'Arbre Croche, July 4, 1779." He had a great host of Indians rounded up that he might tell them the futility of fighting with either the French or Americans against the "mighty British." On his way to this rendevous Colonel de Peyster had sent Lt. Bennett to arrest De Sable. One of his verses refers to Langlade, the British general in charge of attacking forces, Siggenaak, Potawatomi Chief, who is opposing the British and De Sable in the following lines:

Those runagates at Milwakie,
Must now per force with us agree,
Must with Langlade their forces join;
Sly Siggenaak and Naakewoin,
Or, he will send them tout au diable
As he did Baptiste Point de Saible.

The last name is given a footnote explaining that the poet referred to "a handsome negro, well educated, settled at Eschikagou but much in the interest of the French."

Lt. Thomas Bennett's letter, dated Sept. 1, 1779, reporting on the arrest of De Sable may be read in the records of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

I have in my possession a photostatic copy of the page in James Mays' Day Book for 1784 on which he wrote the list of paintings and fine glass entrusted to him by De Sable. The book is in the Burton Historical Collection in Detroit, Michigan.

The sale contract for his Chicago property is signed "Point Sable" and "Jean Lalime," dated Sept. 18, 1800. Witnesses signing are J. Kinzie and Wm. Barnett. Professor Quaife told me the originals of these two papers are in the Wayne County Court House. Since this property is described in detail it can only be assumed that the picture of "De Sable's Cabin" shown in *A. T. Andres History of Chicago* is the trading post built by De Sable which the Indians left standing when they carried out their plans in the massacre of Fort Dearborn. This was the only building which at that time was not burned to the ground. It would seem that the love of the Indians for Jean Baptiste de Sable's memory made it possible for this building to have been preserved until long after the town was rebuilt. It is undoubtedly the site of this cabin which is marked by the plaque on the Kirk Soap Factory at the corner of Pine and Kinzie Streets, Chicago:

Site of the first house in Chicago, erected about 1779 by Jean Baptiste Pointe de Sable, a Negro from Santo Domingo.

At the time of the massacre De Sable's dwelling and barns which he had sold in 1800 were in the possession of John Kenzie, who stabbed Jean Lalime to death across the river from his house, just outside the Fort Dearborn stockade, in the summer of 1812. All of these documents are written in French.

Rev. Thomas A. Meehan, in an article entitled "Chicago's First Citizen, A Negro," *Interracial Review*, April, 1937, supplied the dates of De Sable's marriage, of his daughter's marriage and of the baptizing of his granddaughter in St. Louis. After describing De Sable's Chicago property as listed in the inventory, Rev. Meehan comments:

"It would seem that a small 'rude hut' or 'rude cabin' is a rather odd way of expressing these possessions; one might as well describe the Empire State Building as being a 'nice little place' uptown."

In this book I have gathered all I could of documentary proof, official records and contemporary testimony about Chicago's first settler. The *Handbook of American Indians: Bureau of American Ethnology* and Francis Parkman's classic *History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac*, published in 1851 were the principal sources on the Indians. There remain a large area of conjecture, of unknown occurrences, meetings, conversations and emotional reactions. Extreme proponents of the scientific historical method would confine history to provable documentary foundations, forgetting that most of what mankind has done and thought and said is unknown or forgotten. My book is not accurate history nor is it pure fiction. It is an imaginative interpretation of all the known facts in a sincere attempt to create a reasonable and plausible whole of essential truth.

My reason for attempting a book which must be gathered from so many fragmentary sources has been aptly put by Professor Qaife in his *Checagou*:

"Too long have Chicagoans regarded their first citizen with feelings mingled of levity and contempt. The sober historical record, pieced together from many divergent sources, discloses him as a man in whom the modern city may take legitimate pride. From the humblest conceivable origin Jean Baptiste Pointe de Sable achieved, unaided, a position of commercial importance and assured respectability. He was enterprising and industrious, he inspired friendships which were not shaken by fortune's frown, and he commanded the confidence of men in responsible government and commercial stations. He was a true pioneer of civilization, leader of the unending procession of Chicago's swarming millions."

In the compiling of this material I was aided and encouraged by Miss Harriet B. Jones, enthusiastic Chicago public school teacher. My thanks to Dr. Gene Weltfish, of Columbia University, for directing my attention to details of Indian life. I am deeply indebted to the patient and tireless staffs at the Chicago Historical Society and the Cleveland Branch Public Library of Chicago, the Burton Historical Collection of Detroit, the Peoria Historical Society, the Illinois State Historical Library and the New York Public Library American History Room. The Map Room of the New York Library furnished me with Karpinski's copies of old French maps of the region. I found a small piece of land jutting out into Lake Erie, south of what is now Windsor, Ontario, Canada, marked *Pointe de Sable.* Whether that name merely designated a "sandy point" or whether it is connected with our Jean Baptiste I leave for readers of my story to find out.

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About the Author

SHIRLEY GRAHAM was born in Indiana, the daughter of a Methodist minister, and raised in parsonages all over the country. In high school she was elected class poet and her essay on Booker T. Washington took first place for literary distinction. She has studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and at Oberlin College in Ohio where she took her Master's Degree. In 1938 she was awarded a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship for Creative Writing, and in 1947 she received a Guggenheim Fellowship. Miss Graham travels around the world a great deal, but she makes Brooklyn, New York, her home.

(*continued from front flap*)

That meeting between red man and black shifted the course of history. Because of a strange coincidence, Jean earned the Chief's trust and respect. Their friendship endured even beyond death, for as the murdered Pontiac lay dying, killed at the instigation of the British, he gave Jean his peace belt. "Take this to the Ottawas in Canada, and tell them not to avenge my death. Let no more blood be spilt upon the land. . . ."

Jean Baptiste hurried to Canada to deliver the Chief's message. For two years he travelled by canoe and horseback to councils with Pontiac's former allies, pleading for peace. But the peace that prevailed was uneasy. British and Spanish were tightening their grip on Indian lands. No man could keep these forces from exploding into war.

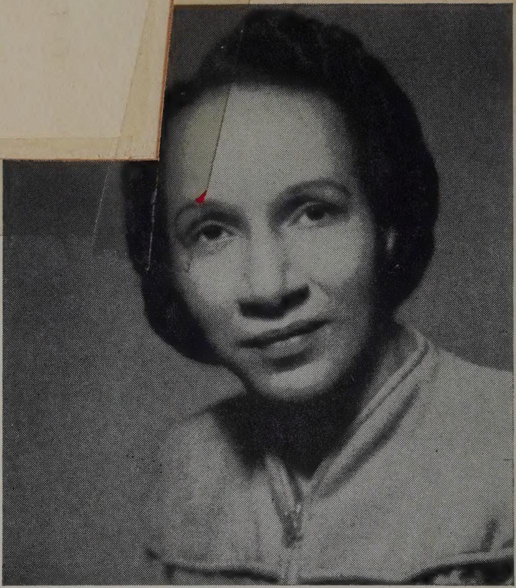
In war a man dreams of a wife and a home, and Jean Baptiste had neither until he met the lovely Indian, Kittihawa, and joined her tribe in order to marry her. And he found his home at last on a river near the Great Lakes. At Eschicagou he built a lodge for hunters and trappers. Fields were planted, marshes drained, barns and stables built. Indians brought furs, bypassing the outraged British who wanted their trade. Eschicagou was small, helpless. But as it rose from the plains another city flung a challenge across the seas. In Philadelphia, grim-faced men signed their names to the Declaration of Independence.

It was then, to the sound of drumbeats, that Jean Baptiste heard the settlers speak a strange new word—"American." Men of different blood and breed hurled their combined might against the British. The Great Lakes region became an arsenal.

Jean Baptiste saw his town destroyed, and rebuilt it from blackened ruins. He envisioned it as it would be—noisy with the rattle of stagecoaches over cobbled streets. Today Chicago towers toward the stars on the firm foundation of one man's faith.

Once again Shirley Graham's skill as a biographer brings to life the fascinating story of a man whose place in history is too little known.

Jacket by Burt Goldblatt



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SHIRLEY GRAHAM is widely known as the biographer of distinguished Negroes who have contributed to the culture and growth of our country.

Her biography of Frederick Douglass, THERE WAS ONCE A SLAVE, won her a Guggenheim Fellowship and the Julian Messner Award for the best book combating intolerance in America. It was selected from over six hundred manuscripts submitted to the contest.

YOUR MOST HUMBLE SERVANT, the amazing story of Benjamin Banneker, free Negro, forgotten hero of America's early years, was the result of a happy accident. In researching for another book, the author came across the name of Benjamin Banneker. When she discovered that he was instrumental in laying out the city of Washington, she became interested in knowing more and the fine biography resulted.

Miss Graham has also written a number of biographies for young people. JEAN BAPTISTE POINTE DESABLE is the story of the Negro who came from the West Indies to build a trading post and founded the city of Chicago. THE STORY OF PHILLIS WHEATLEY, poet of the American Revolution, aroused widespread interest when it was first produced on the radio, for which Miss Graham wrote the script, and has been a popular book with girls. Her best selling title is DR. GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER: Scientist, written in collaboration with George D. Lipscomb—and it is now well over the fifty-thousand mark.

Shirley Graham was born in Indiana, the daughter of a Methodist minister, and raised in parsonages all over the country. She graduated from Oberlin College where she took her Master's Degree. When her father was sent to Liberia to head a mission school, Miss Graham went to Paris to study at the Sorbonne on a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship.

Miss Graham, in private life Mrs. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, travels about the country a great deal.